

## **KHAZAR UNIVERSITY**

**Faculty:** School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**Department:** English Language and Literature

**Major:** English language and literature

### **MA THESIS**

**Theme:** “The characteristic features of the medieval period of English literature and its influence on the post medieval literary works of English writers and poets”

**Master Student:** Gunel Mirzayeva

**Supervisor:** Ph.D. Eldar Shahgaldiyev

**Baku - 2013**

KHAZAR UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

ABSTRACT

OF DISSERTATION FOR MASTER`S DEGREE

THEME

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## Abstract

**The object** of the thesis is a thorough analysis of “*The characteristic features of medieval period of English literature and its influence on the post medieval literary works of English writers and poets*”

**The purpose** of the research work is investigating characteristic features of medieval English literature, analyzing the interrelation between medieval and post medieval literature and explaining the influence of medieval English literature on post medieval one.

**The aims** of the work are as follows:

- 1. To explain the historical and social background of the medieval period of English literature.*
- 2. To analyze the characteristic features of the medieval period of English literature.*
- 3. To identify writers, poets and genres of this period.*
- 4. To analyze works of writers and poets according to their literary style and characteristic features.*
- 5. To describe the relationship between medieval and post medieval English literatures.*
- 6. To determine the influence of the literary traits of the medieval period on the post medieval period.*

**The method** of investigation is content analysis and comparative study. An investigation is made of the works of major figures from the medieval period and the outcomes are compared with the works of relevant authors from the post medieval periods.

The work consists of **introduction, three main chapters, conclusion** and **bibliography**.

**The introduction** provides an overview of the medieval period of English literature. Brief descriptions of all three chapters are included into the introduction of the work.

**The first chapter** reflects on the role of social and historical background in the formation of the literature. It begins with the Anglo Saxons invasion of Britain and their influence on English literature; how the Norman Conquest follows it and their influence on England and its literature.

**The second chapter** deals with the formation of England, its language and literature by means of literary events, poets and writers and their works, the emergence of medieval romances, morality and miracle plays, and the contribution of Gower, Langland, Malory and ends with great Geoffrey Chaucer and new ideas in his works.

**The third chapter** is about the relationship between medieval and post medieval English literature. It encompasses the new genres, poets, plays, prose works, as well as the poets and writers of the post medieval period, which are affected by the medieval English literature.

**The conclusion** covers the results of all three chapters, the mutual interrelation of the medieval and post medieval literary heritage created by English writers.

## CONTENT

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4-7</b>
<b>Chapter I:</b> The roots and historical background of the formation of medieval literature.....	<b>7-24</b>
<b>Chapter II:</b> An analysis of major works of medieval literature: essential literary features, images and portraits.....	<b>25-60</b>
<b>Chapter III:</b> The interrelationship between medieval and post medieval literature.....	<b>61-82</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>83-84</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>85-86</b>

## Introduction

English literature is an interesting part of world culture. It has played a great role in the formation of the world literary heritage and traditions. Masterpieces of prose and poetry and their translations into various languages have attracted many cultures beyond England. From this view, the literature of England has passed a long and difficult way in its development. It has features of English national character that are closely connected with the history and people of England. Its originality was in medieval poetry, in the Chaucer's poems, in the bold thoughts of Thomas More, in the worldwide comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare, in satire of Swift, in the rebellious spirit of the romantic poetry of Byron, and in the humor of Dickens and so on. This list can be continued, because English literature is rich in a series of poets and writers with their works, which made them be recognized as well known authors all over the world.

English literature has been divided into various periods, which differ from one another in specific features as seen in the authors of each period and their masterpieces. It is worth to point out a detailed description of all periods of English literature, but *this MA dissertation covers only the medieval period of English literature since early Anglo-Saxons to Renaissance period, the characteristic features of medieval period of English literature*. It discusses the formation of medieval English literature, investigates the major figures and their works and novelties that they contributed to the development of English literature. It also depicts the interrelations between medieval and post medieval English literature.

In the Middle Ages the nation, language and literature of England started and finished its formation. The history of English literature has developed in the territory of the United Kingdom. Early period of English literature, which sometimes is called Old English, begins with the settlement, more exactly, with the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons. Anglo-Saxons brought to Britain their mode of life, primitive culture, and inclined to borrow from the Celts even their more improved agricultural techniques, which they in their turn, borrowed from the Romans. They preferred to settle in new places, avoiding from cities and creating new settlements. In later historical periods, the collisions of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon worlds manifested itself in different forms. The Norman Conquest (1066) immediately followed the Anglo-Saxons period, and the ancient Celtic traditions and legends, which preserved in the Celtic parts of England, provided the basis for complex cycle of chivalry romances of King Arthur and the Knights of the "Round Table". It was main source for later French and English

medieval romances. Development of the Anglo-Saxons literature, more exactly poetry, differs in a long and very complicated process. Though it has a complex structure, it still depends on reliable sources. There is no doubt about the existence of rich epic traditions of the Anglo-Saxons, and despite of the Christian church influence, they reached us. For instance, old epic poem “Beowulf” is a great masterpiece of the Anglo Saxons. Some traces of monastic and church culture and some parts of ruined monuments directly prove the existence of the first ancient sources, however, most texts of Anglo-Saxon literature reached us in manuscripts. The first chapter of this dissertation includes the introduction and description of the ancient sources about the formation of old and medieval English literature. However, these sources are analyzed in the second chapter.

English literature has developed passing significant historical and literary events. All these facts affected the formation of English literature. The fourteenth century was a period of profound changes in all spheres of life in the history of England. In this century, the English nation was in the progress of the formation. In the bloody battles and hard struggles, the English nation strengthened itself. The cultural development of England went in new directions; its national language was formed; its art and literature improved. For example, the rapid development of the cities is observed towards the end of the thirteenth centuries. Besides it, England met with “black death” which ended in the stagnation of the development of English literature. It ended in a death of hundreds of people, which caused economical crises subsequently leading peasant’s oppression. Therefore, it ended in peasants’ revolt in 1381. These uprisings no longer bypassed English literature. These events affected the medieval English poets and writers. For example, William Langland, and John Gower expressed their attitudes to the uprising in their works. The peasants’ uprising changed the improvement of the medieval English literature, now it was developing towards the church reformation, against Roman Catholic Church. For instance, the English translation of the Bible by Wycliffe made a significant contribution to literature because its translation had some value in the formation of the English prose literary speech. Wycliffe’s English scientific works and pamphlets were in close connection with the translations from the Bible, or are relevant to interpretations from religious books, and they written clearly and distinctly though it had no direct relations in the formation of English literature.

The middle ages of English literature faced with an important event of its history, which had also impact on the literature. It was Hundred Year’s war. Long before a peasant uprising in 1381 and the emergence of the Church reformation movement, a long war with France began in England, and it had some influences on social and religious rising in the

second half of the fourteenth century. It would be rather logical to note that the process of the formation of this nation was also in this century. The national “common” language was forming together with the formation of the English nation. England remained trilingual country for centuries. For the upper layers, the English language remained as “stranger”. Thus, upper classes used Norman French, more exactly, an “aristocratic” language but common people used the Anglo-Saxon language, which later became Middle English and founded Standard English, which we use now. Approval of Standard English language is connected with the literary activity of Chaucer, whose works marked the transition from the Middle Ages to Renaissance. His “Canterbury Tales” was an important step in the development of English literature. English realism originated from his “Tales” according to Chaucer’s great skill of forming images of characters, humor, and satirical mockery of shortcomings. In the second half of the fourteenth century, the relationship between the French and English languages changed dramatically. Though it remained in use, French became the language of minority. Chaucer described the abbess ironically in “The Canterbury Tales” and emphasized that she spoke French beautifully and elegantly as she was taught in the Stratford school, but Paris-French was unknown to her. The greatness of Chaucer was in it. He did not accept Norman French or other languages, so he thought there was only English for him. It turned out that he should be considered the last poet who closed the medieval period of English literature. Moreover, thanks to him and Caxton who invented new type of printing and besides all of it, with the richness of old, medieval ballads and romances, this period had an important place in the history of English literature.

The fifteenth century English literature has a transitional character as passing from the Middle Ages to Renaissance. The ancient traditions were still stronger in it. The transition was still drawing into old and medieval forms, but gradually these forms were filled with new ones. The more the following period was characterized with new historical and literary traditions, the more it resembled the features of the medieval period of English literature.



## **Chapter I. The roots and historical background of the formation of medieval literature**

In this chapter, the general description of the medieval period of England and its literature are described. The aim is to analyze and to define major facts about the formation of medieval English literature. The first chapter of this MA dissertation touches upon such problems that are worth discussing.

The medieval period begins with the collapse of the Great Roman Empire, which happened in 476 and continued until 1300s with the beginning of Renaissance in Italy. However, medieval English literature begins with the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons until beginning of the Renaissance period.

We know this period as “Middle Ages” in the history of the world literature as well. When it was made research on some sources in order to write this MA dissertation, it turned out that this period is also called “Dark Ages”:

“The Dark Ages was the heroic age of British history, for the Dark Age Kings of Britain became the subjects of early British literature, and they resound in the legends of the British nation throughout the succeeding centuries. The Dark Ages followed the Roman Era in Britain and coincided with the Early Middle Ages... The Dark Ages was a time of great turmoil in Britain which saw the complete breakdown of civilized life in the country and outbreak of civil wars among Britons.”<sup>1</sup> There are some reasons why it was called as “dark” ages.. Nevertheless, the main reason was “stagnation” which means the lack of intellect: “...it is also known as the Dark Ages because many historians have viewed this period as a time of great intellectual stagnation.”<sup>2</sup> Then “Dark Ages” was replaced with “Shadowy Ages” – going back to ancient Latin and Greek learning or education. This return was the end of the period that known as “Dark Ages”. The medieval period cannot be completely depicted as the time of stagnation. In those times different changes such as “rebirth of intellect” were occurred. They took place during the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th century (nearly 450) until the 15<sup>th</sup> century (about 1485).

The medieval period of English literature could be divided into two stages: Old and Middle English periods. Old English literature covers the fifth and twelfth centuries and Middle English literature covers twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Both two periods form

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<sup>1</sup> “The British Chronicles”. 5. Rulers, Tyrants and Kings of Dark Age Britain, Early Middle Ages, Introduction. p.141, l.1-4. 24-25. David Hughes. 2007

<sup>2</sup> “British Literature Lifepac 1 the Middle Ages”. Krista L. White, B.S p.2, l. 33-34

medieval period of English literature. Old English Literature begins with the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons and is worth pointing out the introduction of the Anglo-Saxons:

“The history of Old English literature follows closely the history of the Anglo-Saxon tribes. They brought along with them not only a new way of political and social life but also a literature of their own, recounting their ancient mentality, traditions and glorious past. Life for them a struggle to be endured; evil and death were inescapable realities and fame was the only true immortality”<sup>1</sup>

They were the group of people consisted of three tribes- the Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes. The Anglo-Saxons were from the northeastern Europe and they adopted the mode of life and culture of Romans. For example, they have similar language. The Anglo Saxons were barbaric tribesmen and so they have barbaric traits. They were ancient tribes, and each tribe had a king. Elders consisting of a council chose this king. Only elders who were called “witan” took part in a council. Each Anglo-Saxon tribe was divided into four classes. The first were “earls”. This class based on the inheritance. “Freemen” occupied the second place. This class had the right to possess the land and own business. Barons were included to this class. The third class was called “churls”. It was considered the lower class because the class included the servants who worked on the lands of the upper class. However, the servants worked in order to be military protected. Finally, the lowest class was called “thralls”. Slaves were from this class. They were prisoners who often were punished. The Anglo-Saxon tribes fought frequently because fighting with one-another was peculiar to them. However, gradually, these fights snoozed and men married women from other tribes. After many years, these tribal differences disappeared and new little kingdoms appeared. Gradually, kingdoms appropriated one-another and only few of them survived. Besides, they were the Anglo-Saxons who brought pagan beliefs in the sixth century. Classical paganism<sup>2</sup> was a peculiar character in their culture. However, in fact, the view of early Anglo-Saxons about religion differed from that of Christianity. Generally, they believed that the life of any human depended on a fate. They worshiped ancient Gods, especially German ones. For example, even early Anglo-Saxons named their gods such as Fria- “goddess of home”, Woden- “a chief of the gods” etc. The religion of the Anglo-Saxons was something informal as believing in rituals. They immediately adapted everything such as traditions and laws and developed them according to their rules. However, when the Anglo-Saxons captured Roman city and the Great Roman Empire fell down, these tribes appropriated the lands as well as culture as their own property. The Anglo-Saxons were also known as wild tribes:

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<sup>1</sup> “History of British literature from origins to the age of reason” p.5, l. 23-31 Ina Mitielu. Cahul 2010

<sup>2</sup> Paganism is the belief system of the ancient Greeks and Romans

“Of the Roman and British civilization the Anglo-Saxons were ruthless destroyers, exulting, like other barbarians, in the wanton annihilation of things which they did not understand. Every city, or nearly every one, which they took, they burned, slaughtering the inhabitants. They themselves occupied the land chiefly as masters of scattered farms, each warrior established in a large rude house surrounded by its various outbuildings and the huts of the British slaves and the Saxon and British bondmen. Just how largely the Britons were exterminated and how largely they were kept alive as slaves and wives, is uncertain; but it is evident that at least a considerable number were spared; to this the British names of many of our objects of humble use, for example mattock and basket, testify.”<sup>1</sup>

Before the Anglo-Saxon invasion, the religion of England was Christianity and it was spread not only in England but also in Ireland. However, they did not change the religion while they only adapted it into their own belief system-paganism. They saved Christianity and their culture, shortly to say, they mixed their belief with a pervious existing religion. For instance, the most significant and famous story “Beowulf” which gives a detailed description of Old English culture and lifestyle is an essential evidence for the Anglo-Saxon culture. It obviously shows negative effects of paganism and Christianity in the Anglo Saxon culture. The importance of the regal attitude and behavior is also shown as an evident in “Beowulf”. The hero of this work is considered to be an ideal and is called main spiritual force in Germanic tribes or civilization. This thought was clearly described as following:

“....At the core of Germanic civilization was the family. And at the head of each family was the “chief kinsman.” This chief kinsman provided protection and guidance for his family. In turn, the members of the family honored and obeyed the chief kinsman, even risking their lives to do so. On a larger scale, families united to form more powerful political unions, which were called tribes. The head of the tribe was a chief or, as the Anglo-Saxons called him a “king.” A man would become king by personify the heroic ideal. As one writer has noted, he would exhibit in an excellent way the essential duties of migratory life. This hero-king would be the fastest swimmer, the strongest warrior, the most skilled sailor, the wisest ruler, and the most knowledgeable builder and farmer. Like a father figure to all, this king would protect in times of war and provide in times of peace. The same writer has also noted that a good King shared his wealth with his people. This fostered loyalty among the people.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “A history of English literature”, Chapter I, “The Britons and the Anglo-Saxons. To A.D. 1066” Robert Huntington Fletcher 1918. p.3, 1 13-21

<sup>2</sup> “British Literature Lifepac 1 the Middle Ages”. Krista L. White, B.S p.3, 1. 32-43

In its real sense to be an ideal hero is an important feature for a king. Though the affects of paganism are depicted in this epic, one could not find any paganist behavior in the acts of the king. The king is strong and protects his people from enemies. That is why this king should be assessed as an ideal hero, not a person having pagan thoughts.

Generally, the beginning of English literature starts with the invasion, life, culture and traditions of the Anglo-Saxon tribes.

Interestingly, the churches did many useful things in order to educate people during the Anglo-Saxon period. The church brought two important elements of civilization to world culture. These elements have not been seen since the collapse of Roman Empire. They were education and written literature, because until the Anglo-Saxon invasion, there did not exist the written literature, there was only oral literature with manuscripts. The monks recorded and duplicated these manuscripts. They did it in Latin, as the language of the Church and education was Latin. These manuscripts were painted in gold or silver. During these trainings, there emerged skilled students; among them was Venerable Bede (673-735). He was considered “the father of English history”. Thanks to his professional activity, Bede wrote his famous “A history of the English Church and People”. The work introduces the ancient period of the Anglo-Saxon tribes. By means of his talented research skills, studies from the old documents and his conservations with the old, he gave a detailed and the clearest description of early Anglo-Saxons. Sociologist Krishan Kumar writes:

“There is no to question Bede`s importance in English (or, fact that matter European) thought and life. He is regularly invoked as “the father of English history” (more properly, historiography), and his writing has exercised a fascination for scores of scholars throughout the centuries, (what has to be questioned is whether he supplies us with a real clue to English identity in the Anglo-Saxon period)... the English Church was a creation of the Roman Catholic Church (as English reformation historians were to dwell on with anguish), and its chroniclers and commentators, all churchmen were at pains to fit their accounts of the English Church into the layer scheme of things in which the Catholic Church was implicated. That scheme encompassed the power of the “universal” Roman Church and the future of Christianity as a whole. Any part of that enterprise had to be considering the light, in the relation to the whole. Given that there was a reasonable degree of ecclesiastical uniformity in certain sections of Britain, it is not so surprising that Bede should have tried to impose some sort of ideological uniformity on the various groups that inhabited those parts...”<sup>1</sup>

Between two invasions, the Anglo-Saxons and Normans, England met with the

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<sup>1</sup> “The Making of English National Identity”, p. 46-47, l. 29-46 Krishan Kumar, Cambridge University Press 2003.

invasion of the Danes in the eighth and twelfth centuries. In English history, this event is known as “Danish Invasion” and always was remembered with the Vikings<sup>1</sup>. English literature got much important things during the Anglo-Saxon period. As it was mentioned above, important thing, which, they contributed to the history of English literature, was “written literature”. However, the Vikings unfortunately destroyed it. Not only literature was damaged, but also the local inhabitants, villages were fallen down:

“The Vikings would appear in their long ships; they would pillage and rape and then be off to sea with their booty. Monasteries, for they usually continued liturgical treasures and housed groups of men untrained in the arts of war, often were the targets of such raids”.<sup>2</sup> Another source writes:

“Within two centuries new English society was itself fighting the greater barbarian and pagan threat of the Vikings.”<sup>3</sup> After several years, the Danes could found something common with the Anglo-Saxons. The Danes spoke the Germanic language, so did the Anglo-Saxons. Thus, in English vocabulary we can find Danish words, for example, the word “law”. During Danish invasion, the king of the Anglo-Saxons was Alfred (849-901). He was a Latin scholar and honored with the name of “the Great” due to his achievements in English literature. He is a founder of the literary prose in the Anglo-Saxon language. Being a translator of Latin works, Alfred was a creator of a number of original works. Works on the history and law which are not works of art in fact, had an impact on the subsequent development of the Anglo-Saxon prose. He revived literature with his translation of Bede’s “A history of the English Church and People” from Latin into Anglo-Saxon. He and his students translated a series of such manuscripts in order to facilitate education. He offered all necessary facilities of development of the English language and literature. According to some sources, he translated some parts of the Bible too. Alfred the Great is also famous for keeping manuscripts and recordings of English history in his “Anglo-Saxon Chronicle”. It is considered the first history of England and the first prose<sup>4</sup> in English literature. Like Bede’s “History” we can find useful information about earlier English life.

Besides the influence of the Anglo-Saxon invasion, English literature underwent some changes during the Norman Conquest. A little bit about this conquest would be logical transition for following points. Normans invaded England nearly in 1066. They originally were Scandinavians. They came to the northern part of France from Scandinavia and created a

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<sup>1</sup> warriors

<sup>2</sup> “Anglo-Saxon Spirituality”, Introduction. p.13, l. 6-9, Robert Boeing, USA 2000

<sup>3</sup> “Britain before Conquest”, Chapter one, Introduction. p.1, l.20-22, Jennifer Laing, Lloyd Robert, Norfolk 1979.

<sup>4</sup> The ordinary form of spoken or written language, without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry or verse. (“Dancing at the Edge of the World” p.105, l. 23-25. Ursula K. Le Guin. USA 1989)

very strong authority and their territory was called Normandy. (The word “Norman” is derived from the word “Norsemen” which means “men from the north”). Normandy was a French province and ruled by the French duke. The Norman Conquest differed from the Anglo-Saxon invasion. First difference was in their language. Unlike the Anglo-Saxons, the Normans used French as their official language because territory belonged to France. However, before this conquest, the king of England tried to introduce Norman culture to England, generally to English people. Nevertheless, the English were so severe that they refused it. This effort always ended in enmity between the English and the Normans.

These two invasions have had a great importance in the formation of the English literature and language. The sharp change happened after the Norman Conquest, since about 1100. During these years, the English language underwent changes. It gained a new form, from Anglo-Saxon to Middle English. This new language is more familiar to us. For example, in G. Chaucer’s works- “knyght” is “knight”, “ther” is “there”, “fro is from”, “chivalrie” is “chivalry” etc. However, this change took a very long time. The development of the medieval period could be considered after the Norman Conquest, because it differs from Old English, for example: the addition of the French vocabulary influenced English literature:

“...French and Germanic influences subsequently compete for the mainstream role in English literature. The French poetic tradition inclines to lines of a regular metrical length, usually linked by rhyme into couplets or stanzas. German poetry depends more on rhythm and stress, with repeated consonants (alliteration) to bind the phrases. Elegant or subtle rhymes have a courtly flavor. The hammer blows of alliteration are a type of verbal athleticism more likely to draw applause in a hall full of warriors.”<sup>1</sup>

The English hated new comers or the Normans and it was not roundly. After their invasion, most of the Anglo-Saxon lands were given to the Norman lords, barons etc. The Anglo-Saxon aristocracy became to work as peasants because these were their lands that were given to the Norman lords. They forced peasants to work for them, and English people were treated as the kept down nation. This invasion had results in social life of English people. Norman Conquest, from all viewpoints, exactly completed racial renewal that was necessary, as mentioned above, for Anglo-Saxon England. Normans did not forget to carry with them from France their interest for entertainment, beauty and majestic rite, light-hearted song, cavalier sports, wealthy dresses, well-drawn manuscripts, aristocratic style of architecture in cathedrals and palaces, formal religious ceremonies, etc. which were not the case for Anglo-Saxon nature. In this respect, the great mass of Anglo-Saxon life thoroughly took forms of

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<sup>1</sup> historyworld.net

grace and beauty, turning its monotone image into multicolored one. Anglo-Saxons, in their turn, gave less care to the Conquest at first; they did not accept it as the most drastic and dangerous of the national evils being subject to enemy's tyranny and contempt. Distinct from the "Danes", the Normans were heathen and did not believe in idols or something similar. Very few of them desired to suppress the people, which they conquered. However, they preferred to present themselves as stonehearted and absolute rulers. Norman King William maintained the status of some Saxon nobles and fewer landlords after it, they promised to observe his ruling and not to rebel afterwards. William bestowed the widows upon the majority of the kingdom's estates to his nobles and the large variegated crowd of disobedient fighters of the king's army as he pledged. The knights and nobles who were secular figures of the feudal tenure, each of which was supported by the Norman soldiers and subjected land bound Saxon workers to serfdom ranked in the lordships, similar to the high positions in the Church. Dark stony castles were built in every part of the country and grand and luxurious ones that were far from Anglo-Saxon dreams displaced ordinary Anglo-Saxon cathedrals and churches.

However, the most general immediate result of the Conquest was to changing England into a trilingual country, where Latin, French, and Anglo-Saxon were spoken separately. The Norman clergy were much more thoroughly familiar with Latin than the Saxon priests had been; and the introduction of the rich Latin culture resulted in a brilliant outburst of Latin literature, in the twelfth century, at the court of Henry II. In England, as well as in the rest of Western Europe, Latin continued to be a language of religion and learning until the sixteenth century. Norman French was introduced by the Conquest as the language of the ruling and upper social class. Anglo-Saxon, which we now term English, remained inevitably as the language of the subject race, but their literature was at first crushed down into insignificance.

The literature and language faced fundamental changes during the Norman invasion. As the language of the Normans was French, a lot of French word entered English vocabulary. The interesting thing was that William the Conqueror did not know English, even any English word; he spoke Norman dialect of the French language. Influence of French, previous language of the English nation and the Anglo Saxon dialect separated the language of the nation in the following ways as it mentioned above:

1. Latin, which was considered the language of the monastery and clergy, was previously used one. Education was in Latin. By means of Latin, Christianity was introduced into Britain and that is why Latin was firstly recognized as the language of the church. Among educated persons first English writers appeared, and their writings were written in Latin.

However, the Anglo-Saxons attitude towards Latin was distinct. Though they speak in Anglo-Saxon dialect, they also used Latin. They adopted a great deal of Latin words and used in their daily life. Among the Anglo-Saxon tribes, the Celts specially mixed Latin words with their own dialect. For instance, six hundreds of such words were adopted whereas most of them were not handed over:

“Among the few Latin words that the Anglo-Saxons seem likely to have acquired upon settling in England, one of the most likely, in spite of its absence from the Celtic languages, is “ceaster”. This word, which represents the Latin *castra* (camp), is a common designation in Old English for a town or enclosed community. It forms a familiar element in English place-names such as Chester, Colchester, Dorchester, Manchester, Winchester, Lancaster, Doncaster, Gloucester, Worcester, and many others. Some of these refer to sites of Roman camps, but it must not be thought that a Roman settlement underlies all the towns whose names contain this common element. The English attached it freely to the designation of any enclosed place intended for habitation, and many of the places so designated were known by quite different names in Roman times. A few other words are thought for one reason or another to belong to this period: port (harbor, gate, town) from L. *portus* and *porta*; mûnt (mountain) from L. *mons*, *montem*; torr (tower, rock) possibly from L. *turns*, possibly from Celtic; wîc (village) from L. *vîcus*. All of these words are found also as elements in place-names. It is possible that some of the Latin words which the Teutons had acquired on the continent, such as street (L. *strata via*), wall, wine, etc., were reinforced by the presence of the same words in Celtic.”<sup>1</sup>

The best example for is the Old English work - “Beowulf”. This old epic is rich for the Celtic words, which are originally were Latin words adopted by the Anglo- Saxons. However, some words are still unknown and could not be translated. For example:

“...he headle to geong  
Stod on stapole, geseah steeped hrof  
Golde fahne and Grendles hold...”<sup>2</sup>

The translation of this extract into modern English is as following:

“..he went to the hall, stood on the *stapol*, saw the gold-decorated steep roof and Grendel`s hand.” The exact meaning of the word “*stapol*” is unknown. Nevertheless, when it was looked through this epic-exactly to write the translation, in different sources, the meaning of this word was explained as the “support pillar or step”.

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<sup>1</sup> “Latin Influence on Old English” Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable a chapter from a History of the English Language, 3rd. ed. 1978

<sup>2</sup> “Beowulf” l.925-927



Not all forms of writings were initiated in this language; for example, scientific works, historical chronicles and anti-clerical satire were in Latin. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the works of the satirical nature were written. Walter Map<sup>1</sup> includes the five-volume work “De nugis curialium” which means “Trifles of Courtiers”. As he was a chaplain at the court of Henry II, Walter Map was acquainted with the manners and customs of the court circles very well. He told about them in the form of anecdotes and funny stories, including the works and retellings of the folklore character (legends, sagas, and songs). In his book Map produced a narrative stories for a long time, but the key purpose was not only entertaining: it contained bold satirical attacks on the church circles.

2. Norman French. As it turned out that, the Normans were people coming from Scandinavia to the north part of France, and they adopted French with their own dialect. When they invaded Britain, they brought with themselves their language and culture. The fact, which is focused of attention, is at that time there was not French language, more exactly, standard French. There existed only few dialects, which had taken their origin from Latin. Among these dialects was Normandy dialect, which spread over England after invasion. It is worth to point out that the words “king” and “queen” are English words and may be Normans liked to be called by the words of higher level. Other names of upper classes like “government” are French, for example, “minister”, “state”, “assembly”, “parliament” etc. In addition, other words as “madam”, “master”, “prince”, “baron”, “vassal”, “feudal” etc. are also French words and after the Conquest, many of these kinds of words entered the English vocabulary. Moreover, derivative words with a French word and an English suffix or prefix also entered the English vocabulary. For example, “un-able”, “bear-able”, “out-cry”, “em-bolden” and so on:

“During this second period, the influence of French on Middle English is strongest because the French speakers are adding French loans to the English they are acquiring. Some estimate the total number of loans in this period to be 10.000. The words borrowed are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and a few adverbs.”<sup>2</sup>

Their invasion has contributed to the spread of French influence on the socio-political and cultural life of the country. There was a never-ending struggle among Anglo-Saxon lords in order ambitiously to expand their holdings, they were at odds with each other and opposed the strengthening of the royal power. The official language became French and it was used by the ruling elite and in the parliament, courts, at schools, and it was used by those parts of the

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<sup>1</sup> The writer of the medieval period (1140-1208)

<sup>2</sup> “A history of the English Language”, Chapter 5, From Old to Middle English, p.99, 1.18-21., Elly Van Gelderen, USA 2006

population who moved from France. The native population spoke the Anglo-Saxon language. In church circles, Latin was used.

Thanks to this language, the literature was enriched by various genres. It introduced chivalric poetry, which was originated from the Norman French language. From the end of the eleventh century to the beginning of the thirteenth century, “chivalrous poetry” widely spread in Provence, which was situated in the south of France. Provence, as politically independent region, went through economic and cultural development at that time. Consequently, an embodiment of emerging chivalrous views, troubadour<sup>1</sup> poetry, expressing itself as a new culture, which is secular and far from ascetic religious moralities, came to presence. Chivalric environment was rich of some manners of polite behavior that made knights indifferent and conscientious, defending the helpless and respecting beautiful ladies. Poets of the period glorified the grace of beautiful women describing attitudes of knights to them. The knights presented by the contemporary troubadours were far of reality and unnatural at a large extend. However, poetry benefited the tendency of the period to present deep feelings in its future development.

It reveals that works in French, which was presented in the Norman dialect of Old French were occupied an important place in English literature during the eleventh and thirteenth. Some of these works had been brought from France, others were created in England. One of the most well known pieces of French national heroic epic was “The Song of Roland”. It was a common poetic chronicle containing genealogical description of the Dukes of Normandy. Though Norman French was the language of upper class, they still tried to learn something in English, because communication with the local people was not easy in their language. In “A history of English literature” is written:

“It must not be supposed, notwithstanding, that the Normans, however much they despised the English language and literature, made any effort to destroy it. On the other hand, gradual union of the two languages was no less inevitable than that of the races themselves. From, the very first the need of communication, with their subjects must have rendered it necessary for the Normans to acquire some knowledge of the English language; and the children of mixed parentage of course learned it from their mothers. The use of French continued in the upper strata of society, in the few children's schools that existed, and in the law courts, for something like three centuries, maintaining itself so long partly because French was then the polite language of Western Europe. But the dead pressure of English was

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<sup>1</sup> The word “troubadour” represents “Occitan” *trabador*, from the verb *trobar*, meaning “to find”, “to invent”, or “to compose”; hence, a troubadour is “one who finds, invents, or composes” (“Troubadour Poems”, From the South of France, Introduction, p. 1, 1.4-6, D. Paden and Frances Freeman Paden, D.S Brewer, Cambridge 2007.)

increasingly strong, and by the end of the fourteenth century and of Chaucer's life French had chiefly given way to it even at Court.”<sup>1</sup>

3. Anglo-Saxon. The native population spoke the Anglo-Saxon language. The Anglo-Saxon tribes of the British Isles brought their language, their way of life and culture, further development of which proceeded in the expansion of tribal system and the formation of feudal relations. Monuments of the Anglo-Saxons were in runic alphabet (inscriptions on swords and household items, the inscription carved on the stone cross in the village of Rutvell in Scotland). There are some evidences of the existence of songs, performed during weddings and funerals, at work, during the military campaigns. Stories, legends and songs passed from generation to generation.

It is already obvious that by English language, in fact, we mean the English-French-English languages that dominated. These two languages were very different for the first hundred years, but then about in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the English language changed under the French influence. In addition, in the English vocabulary all complicated grammatical inflections were dropped by means of this influence and these complicated inflections were formed before the Conquest. The adoption of French language gave richness to the English vocabulary and helped the formation of the modern English language. The Anglo-Saxon vocabulary was so harsh and poor but thanks to the French influence, English language changed into rich, full and flexible vocabulary.

As the country was trilingual, the medieval people were also divided into different social classes. The languages that they used had impacts on their daily life. For example, people who used Latin were the priests, scholars or educated people and they devoted their life to religion and education. Since the end of the sixth century, by means of the spreading of Catholicism in England, the Christian Church literature was developing in Latin. Its centers were monasteries of Kent, Wessex and Northumbria, which were centers of science and education in the Middle Ages as well. In Anglo-Saxon literature, such representatives as Caedmon and Cynewulf were associated with monastery activities and Christian religious poetry. Among them was writer, scholar and historian Bede, (Bede Venerabilis, 673-735) who was the creator of “Ecclesiastical History of the English people” (“*Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*”, 731), inclusive of valuable information about the history of England, legends and traditions of Anglo-Saxons. He is the author of the first philological works: “About Spell” (“*De orphographia*”) and “About the art of poetry” (“*De arte metrica*”). The democratic nature of anti-church tendency was satirical literature, samples of which were

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<sup>1</sup> “A history of English literature”, Chapter I, The Norman-French Period. A.D. 1066 To About 1350 Robert Huntington Fletcher 1918. p.3, 15-14

created in the environment of lower clergy. Wandering clerics and students, Vagants<sup>1</sup> composed verses in Latin, exposing to ridicule the Catholic Church and praised the joys of life, preferring wine and women.

In the twelfth century, French literature was experiencing prosperity in England. Such writers as Benoit de Sainte-Maure, Robert de Borron, and Marie French were representatives of it. In verse novels “Brutus” (“Brut” by Layamon)<sup>2</sup> and “Romance of Rou”<sup>3</sup> tells us the story of the Normans. The “Romance of Rou”, which consists of four parts, narrates the story of the conquest of Normandy by Scandinavian Viking Rollo and his subsequent reign of his successors.

The fourteenth century is a period of great changes and developments in the life of England. It was that period when the English language and nation were formed. In the history of literature it is known as a century of Langland and Chaucer, whose works reflected the most characteristic features of life and culture of the time. Langland totally connected with the culture of the Middle Ages, while Chaucer is the last poet of the Middle Ages and the forerunner of Renaissance in England. Both poets were contemporaries and witnesses of great social upheavals and distresses in the life of their country, especially important of them was the Hundred Years` War with France (1337-1453), the plague that swept the country and devastated many of its districts, and a peasant uprising in 1381. In the fourteenth century feudalism is going to fade away, there appears the signs of new bourgeois social phenomena in England. Cities were developing and their populations were growing, the scope of trade of Britain was expanded, appearances of the villages were gradually changed, and feudal oppression was intensified. Discontents resulted in peasant revolts. Blushing in the spring of 1381, they quickly spread across the country.

Inspired by the accusatory sermons by John Ball, and craftsman Watt Tyler, peasants demanded the destruction of feudal privileges, the equation of all classes and cease of abuses of the clerics. Repeated words from the sermons of John Ball were spreading across the country. The second half of the fourteenth century is remembered with the struggle against the Roman Catholic Church; the requirement of protesting residents of towns and villages was in favor of church reform and against the feudal order. John Wycliffe (1324-1384) set off

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<sup>1</sup> From Latin word “vagantes” – vagrant, waster.

<sup>2</sup> Layamon is the first author to write the story of Arthur in the English vernacular. His *Historia Britonum* or *Brut* is an early Middle English version of the history of Britain. At its core lies a poetic paraphrase and elaboration of Wace`s *Roman de Brut*. (“Arthurian writers”, “Layamon”, p.45, l.1-4, Laura Corner Lambdin and Robert Thomas Lambdin, USA 2008)

<sup>3</sup>The *Roman de Rou* is a long verse chronicle, which narrates the history of the first dukes to rule over Normandy; for the period after 1066, it also provides an account of the first Norman kings of England. The work covers the period from the origins of Normandy, i.e., the time of Hasting and Rollo (Rou) .... (“The History of the Norman People”, Wace`s “*Roman de Rou*”, Introduction, p.xi, l. 2-5, Glyn S. Burgess, Great Britain 2004.)

religious reform ideas in the treatises. The activities of Wycliffe and his followers, the Lollards<sup>1</sup>, have been linked to exposure of the Roman Catholic Church. They were against authority of the Church. However, the Church tried to stop them, but they went on spreading their master's teachings, even after his death. Wycliffe was against certain religious dogmas of the Catholic clergy condemned the perversity. He thought that the issue of the Church should be only religion, not to interfere people's social life. He always was against the wealth of the clergy. He hated clergy and called them "red and fat cheeks" according to their appearance. He wanted to show that the true religion was in the Bible, not in the absurd speeches made by the Church. He claimed the right to self-interpret the Bible. His translation of the Bible from Latin into English (1382-1384) became widespread and was of great importance for the development of the English language and literature.

All outraged rebels and uprisings imposed an impact on the medieval writers. We can easily observe it in their works. The fourteenth century is the era of intense competition of various trends in the emerging national literature of England. Turning to the genre of medieval didactic allegory, William Langland in his "Vision of Peter Plowman" expressed the mood of the masses in the years preceding the peasant uprising in 1381 as a reaction to this rebellion, but in the anti position was a poem of John Gower, "The Voice" ("Vox clamantis", 1382). At the time when Geoffrey Chaucer mastered and developed new poetic genres and forms for English literature, an interest to chivalrous poetry revived and cultivated in England. English literature was enriched in genres ideologically. The greatest writers of the fourteenth century Langland, Gower and Chaucer, developed traditional medieval stories, saturated them with the latest content, created works and covered with the turbulent life of their time. Allegorical poems, didactic and courtly poems, ballads and madrigals, epistles and odes, tracts and sermons, poems and crowning work of Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" absorbed all different genres of the time in English literature in the fourteenth century. Largely than in previous centuries, English literature revealed due to the culture of the European countries, especially France and Italy. People's life became much more different and troublesome than previous centuries. Life was harder because of revolts and wars. In particular, the crusades<sup>2</sup> were popular. According to these wars, social classes like the rich and the poor had spread over England during the middle ages. The poor class suffered from starvation and higher taxes imposed by the ruling class and that was the reason why peasant uprisings often took place.

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<sup>1</sup> The Lollards were political and religious movement in England in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. They were influenced by the teachings of John Wycliffe. They believed a priest must be pious in order to perform the sacraments, and "lay priesthood. ("The Trouble with Christianity", "The seeds of the Protestant Reformation", p.64, 1.5-8, Philip Voerding, USA 2009)

<sup>2</sup> A series of religious wars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

When landowners gave freedom to their workers (peasants) and paid in cash, peasants were still angry with their landowners about high taxation. They began to complain about discrimination and demanded reduction taxes. Finally, this ended in the 1381 revolt. Though this uprising was destroyed, many revolts of this kind went on, and it always ended in peasants' resentment. Peasants worked on lands most of the year in order to try to cultivate much for surviving and not to starve next year. Churches always watched the works of peasants and lords, because church priests noted growing and reaping days. The church priests marked resting days for peasants and lords as well. They spent their leisure by attending social activities such as games of chance, drinking at local taverns, or visiting fairs, etc. The Roman Catholic Church was the only powerful ruling institution not only in England but also in Europe. Religion was an inseparable part of human life. To be a devoted person to the Church was important thing in the middle ages. Almost all scholars were attending the Church, because Latin was the language of education. Both clergy and scholars organized educational centers for learners. There appeared several educational centers where heads were abbots. They also were highly educated people. In medieval period, churchmen served to hold the ceremony of crown. During 1066 and 1200 years, clerics from Normandy ordered construction of new churches and cathedral. These new buildings were built in different parts of London. The interesting fact is that, in the middle ages The Roman Catholic Church helped for Crusades, religious wars. As the Church was very wealthy, the higher classes of England just envy it. Thus, there were clashes between lords, barons, kings in one frontier and bishops, popes in another.

Life in villages kept its silence. There social life was more peaceful than the centre. In the Middle Ages, trade developed rapidly and there appeared merchants. Therefore, trade was spreading and developing and gradually trade centers were emerged. One of the largest of these trade centers became London, which, in fact, was built by Romans. Towns also grew rapidly and developed, some of them became industrialized cities because of the development of the industry in Europe. The growth of towns meant wealth. To be a rich meant to possess own lands and privilege of nobility. However, this privilege often ended in diseases, because possessing lands meant living much closer together under same conditions far from sanitary. In addition, it caused infectious diseases to spread. For example, one in third of population was killed by the bad epidemics, which called the Black Death<sup>1</sup> that was in 1348 and 1349.

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<sup>1</sup> The most devastating event of medieval times was the Black Death, also called the Great Mortality, Pestilence, and the Bubonic Plague. The disease, transmitted by fleas, caused a high fever and a person's lymph nodes to swell (as large as an egg) and was highly contagious. ("the Middle Ages" p.12, Katie Kubesh, Niki McNeil, Kim Bellotto, USA 2007)

During the Middle Ages correctly to say, in later middle ages, feudalism was going to fade out. When new towns were built, the notion of feudalism was disappearing. Exchange of commodities among countries prospered cities. The craftsmen were building marvelous cathedrals, churches, castles, etc. By means of these buildings, we obtain much information about the history of medieval period England.

Though the Norman invasion caused the formation of the English language and literature, it is doubtless that the growth did not start in the beginning of the conquest. By means of the Norman Conquest, the literature and education faced with temporary stagnation. After absorption of all lands and people, England passed through “a little renaissance”. It was a rebirth of education and learning in the twelfth century. In this period, churches continued their way of learning, but new educational centers were built. Famous universities of England were built during this period, after the Conquest. It is worth to point out that the founders of the first Universities came from Paris, France. English students studied in Paris, but in the twelfth century, there were struggles about Logic, thus some professors were moved off. They went to Britain and founded new Universities. They were the University of Oxford<sup>1</sup> that was built in 1168 and the University of Cambridge<sup>2</sup>, which was built in 1209. Many people went to study there and to hear lectures. Later, these Universities prepared famous scholars to all over the world. In the middle ages, the most famous scholar was Roger Bacon whom the University of Oxford produced. He was mathematician and at present time is considered the father of English philosophy:

“Roger Bacon was instrumental in laying early foundation of modern scientific thinking. He was keenly aware of the interrelatedness of all the separate sciences and contributions that science makes to the understanding of reality. He explained the role of the experimental method in confirming or refuting speculative hypothesis.”<sup>3</sup>

As it was mentioned above, translation of the Bible was important thing for the English language. When the new education centers like Universities emerged, Latin was still the language of the church in the middle ages. Norman French was often used by upper classes, especially in government. Both two languages created Middle English. At that time, all literature was written in Latin, because of its status as language of education. However,

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford in the Middle Ages was one of the great European universities. Although it was a secondary town, schools, especially of liberal arts and theology appeared there in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and were transformed into a university around 1200. (“Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages”, Oxford University OF, p.1064, 1.1-5, Andre Vachuz in association with Barrie Dobson and Michael Lapidge, USA 2000)

<sup>2</sup> In 1209, a brawl between scholars and townspeople led to the secession of the former, notably to Cambridge where they created the second university. (“Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages”, Oxford University OF, p.1064, 1.5-7, Andre Vachuz in association with Barrie Dobson and Michael Lapidge, USA 2000)

<sup>3</sup> “Dictionary of World biography” Volume II, The Middle Ages, Roger Bacon, p.112, 1.32-36, Frank N. Magill, UK, US 1998)

time after time this language gave its way to vernacular. It was the mother tongue of people. If you give attention to the afore described ideas, the translation of the Bible took an important place in the formation of the English language, because the use of the vernacular widened after 1372. It was when John Wycliffe began to translate the Bible from Latin into English. His translation proved a major advance for English literature. This step encouraged English people to learn, to write and to speak in English.

Another way to encourage literacy and people, was invention of printing, how to say, printing in movable type which belongs to the Middle Ages. As it is said a German silversmith, Gutenberg invented printing in 1445. It was a device with individual metal letters that could be used repeatedly. Some changes were made in a device that caused in developing English literature afterwards, because this type of printing could not satisfy printers, as well as readers:

“The method of printing with movable type which Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz (c. 1400-68) introduced to Europe was initially slower and more costly at that. Moreover, Gutenberg`s technology did not attempt to achieve a new goal”<sup>1</sup>

A London merchant William Caxton invented first moveable-type press in 1476. This invention marked the end of a manual scribing by the church. By means of this device, books could be produced rapidly and could have attracted readers` attention.

Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, England seems to undergo, almost, completely changes in all spheres of life. Political views became much more stable. Trade and agriculture resounded. The population of England began to increase rapidly. Life of cities revived. In those years, fighters of the medieval period changed their way of attitude to their private life. It would be rather logical to point out that warriors began to be treated as “knights”. They showed characteristic features of chivalry. Their change was not in vain. Ladies of the higher classes wanted to be treated much more polite by admirers. They demanded new tenderness from lovers. The love between ladies and their admirers was called “courtly love”<sup>2</sup> in the medieval period. In some sources, the term “courtly love” is considered one part of antifeminism. Some scholars use this term in order to show the traditions in which women are treated as the objects of admiration. However, not all lovers could be under the situation of “courtly love”. First, the lady who is the leading part of this term should be from

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<sup>1</sup> “Understanding the Middle Ages”, Printing, p.238, l.31, p.239, l.1-3, Harald Kleinschmidt. USA 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The term “courtly love” has been criticized as an anachronistic expression, first coined by the celebrated French philologist Gaston Paris (1839-1903) between 1881 and 1883 as a translation of the Provençal *fin`amors* (literally “refined love”). (“Chivalry and Courtly Love in the Middle Ages”, Introduction, p.2, l.1-4, Jennifer G. W. US 2011)



upper classes. Then, she has to be wooed, from some distance as usual. The second part of this situation, the knight who adores a lady, begins to fight for her at the aim of getting her respect. He even shows himself as lady's "servant" in order to gain lover's agreement. The special feature of the knight of "courtly love" differs him from other knights. He suffers from different kinds of diseases. This knight always tries to do his best to get his lady's mercy.

According to regulations of feudalism, the love or the relationship between the knights and their lovers resembles the relationship between feudal lords and vassals. In the Middle Ages if somebody married a rich woman, he married her not because for love, but for her property. Nevertheless, the women of higher classes chose the men on the purpose of ruling their property. In this case, "rich" husbands always "loved" their wives. Thus, in "courtly love" the woman attracts her lover herself and the knight falls in love with his lover from the depth of his heart. In this case, the true marriage in "courtly love" is incredible. Nevertheless, in the works such as "Knight's Tale" and "Franklin's Tale"<sup>1</sup> by G. Chaucer's, the lovers of courtly love fell in love and then married. Could the courtly love be considered a true love? The answer of this question is controversial. However, with the courtly love of the Middle Ages, new attitude to "ladies" emerged. Even we can observe the traces of this love in today's social life.

The portrait of an ideal lady in the medieval literature was elucidated very often. The literature of the middle ages introduces us two types of women. These women stand oppose to each other. One of them is Eve. Another one is Mary. We know much more about Eve from religious books. She was one of the first creatures of God who did not observe God's orders. In the Middle Ages literature, the stereotype of Eve is shown as the woman who caused the "fall of man". Mary is shown as the "the savior of a man". Sometimes Mary is called the second Eve, because according to Latin translation Mary is Ave. In addition, Ave is the backward spelling of Eva. However, these are only suppositions. In the medieval literature, virginity expressed the inaccessibility of women. Almost all heroines of the medieval works carry the character of Mary. It is important to mention that unlike modern period, in the Middle Ages virginity is considered the important moment in the life of women. Thus, to gain the heart of virgin women was more difficult than widowed or married ones. They were unattainable and protected themselves from any relationship with men until marriage. To pray Virgin is associated with the medieval chivalry. In the medieval romance "Sir Gawain and Green Knight", Mary's image is drawn on the inside of the shield of Sir Gawain. It means that

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<sup>1</sup> from "The Canterbury Tales" by Geoffrey Chaucer

Sir Gawain is her knight. The power of this image is in her clarity, because virginity is in the power to seize the power of the strongest.

While summarizing the first chapter, it would be rather logical to note that, the literature of the medieval period with its all features could be divided into two parts: religious and secular literature. From the name it is obvious that religious literature includes the religious works, especially manuscripts. Here also included some phrases from the Bible and songs which most of them were devoted to the Virgin. From the beginning of this period, we know that, earlier works were written in Latin. In addition, Latin was the language of the Church. That is why it is not doubtful, why these earlier works are included to the religious literature. The second part is secular literature which inside is rich in variety of genres. All genres of the Middle Ages literature from the beginning of earlier period without any religious feature are included. It is important to note about forms of medieval English literature, which also could be included into a secular literature. For example, ballads, chivalry romances, lyrical poems, drama etc. The Middle Ages is famous for its writers with their best works that changed and influenced the development of the medieval period of English literature. About the main poets and writers and their contribution to English literature will be described and analyzed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter II. An analysis of major literary works of medieval literature: essential literary features, images and portraits**

The second chapter of this MA dissertation covers main figures and their works from the beginning of the Old English until the Middle Ages English literature. The characteristic features of the medieval literature and cohesion of the previous chapter is depicted as well.

The Middle Ages is rich in different genres and forms of literature and poets and writers who brought innovations with their works to this period. The Medieval period of English literature begins with the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons as mentioned in the first chapter. Thus, the middle ages starts with the Anglo-Saxon literature. Due to the first chapter, the Normans introduced written literature, correctly to say, after their Conquest. Until their Conquest, the Anglo-Saxons used an oral literature. The Anglo-Saxons invaders brought to Britain a new tradition of oral poetry. Generally, their oral literature introduces us the life of ancient Germanic tribes, their traditions, ancient language and daily life and the environment where they lived. The oral poetry reflected features of paganism, because the religion of earlier Anglo-Saxons was paganism. That is why, sometimes, the Anglo-Saxons poetry is called “early pagan poetry”.

It is doubtless that the Anglo-Saxons put the unused or rough beginning of the poetry. It was like to come first and create rough little poems, and ballads, which spread from region to region, from continent to continent. These ancient songs, poems, ballads are very popular today. These forms of literature spread and changed their forms among all races. How did they do it? When a human being began to live, there lived the group of wild humans, how to say, savages. For example, after winning the wars or achievements in hunting the tribes assembled and danced. It was especially around the fire. In this moment, somebody suddenly interrupted traditional shouting of the crowds and began to shout louder with special tone that one could see rhythm in his or her shout. In this case, the crowd began to repeat his or her shout repeatedly. Gradually, there emerged the habit of compositions like ballads. These ballads expressed emotions and feelings of ancient Anglo Saxons and passed from generation to generation, but from mouth to mouth, perhaps some generations changed the forms of these songs; some of them became poems, some remained as ballads etc. During the development of the medieval period, these genres were reached palaces in order to entertain lords or warriors. Most of these products were lost during the development and the transition of the periods until the written literature emerged. However, it would be logical to note that the

process of forming poems or songs like this is still popular among tribes or uneducated people of some continents.

Regularly, develops a special kind of literature, which takes its origin from ancient ballads. This is an epic. "It is a long narrative poem sometimes developed orally, those deeds of a legendary or heroic figure."<sup>1</sup> "Beowulf" is considered the first work that composed in English and that is why "Beowulf" is recognized as the national epic of England. The poem of "Beowulf" reached us in a single manuscript, which was written nearly in the beginning of the tenth century and by unknown author. This manuscript is now kept in the British Museum in London. The poem is divided into two parts connected to each other only by a person who is the main character, Beowulf. Each of these parts mainly describes Beowulf exploits. The first part tells about the story of how Beowulf saved the neighboring country from two terrible monsters. The second part describes how he reigned at home and happily ruled his native land for fifty years and how he won a fire-breathing dragon; and how he was killed by poisonous wounds and was buried with honor by his people. The main division of the poem is broken by stitched episodes, which was very important thing about the origin of the poem and clarifying its complex composition, time of occurrence etc. Extremely complex composition of the poem is striking. In the form in which it has come down to us, it certainly is a monument of earlier origin. Ancient versions of stories probably lie at the heart of it. They even could go back to folk-song tradition. Hence, this could be a reason for difficulties of analysis and dating of the poem.

It is undeniable that the poem belongs to the samples of the heroic poems of the national epic. It was mentioned above. First, the content of the poem and its central image prove it. Beowulf embodies the shapes of true national hero, shows bravery for the sake of many people. He frees the friendly Danish people from the terrible monsters such as Grendel and his mother. In the second part of the poem, he acts as a "father of the nation", to save his country from a dragon. Scientists of old school have considered "Beowulf" as a unique monument, testifying to the rich epic tradition of pagan, and destroyed by the intolerance of Christian church. It is believed that the poem was established even before the Anglo-Saxons adopted Christianity, and the shorter heroic songs were on its basis. Other early researchers show, for example, that the poem was formed before the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain. Therefore, before the fifth century, and tried to open its mythological basis. However, over the last thirty years the attitude of Western European researchers to "Beowulf" has changed dramatically. Most scientists now consider this monument not as the national epic, but as a

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<sup>1</sup> "Prentice Hall Literature" The English Tradition. 1989. p.23, l. 1-3

homogeneous whole, a poem book, written by a Christian clergyman at least in the eighth or ninth centuries.

The central episode of the first part of the poem – Beowulf’s battles with Grendel and his mother, have a number of parallels in the ancient sagas and folk tales of the monster as to brake into the house and kidnap people. The second part of “Beowulf” is also similar to the common Germanic legends. However, in the episode of the battle between Beowulf and the dragon have a number of characteristic differences from similar continental Germanic legends. Beowulf fights with a dragon in order to free his country from the monster, but not for the sake of his simple pleasure. In the beginning of the battle, his people see that there is a danger for their leader, but they are afraid of helping him, except for the faithful Wiglaf. Finally, the episode ends with the death of the hero.

The poetic technique of the poem proves the fact that “Beowulf” belongs to Anglo-Saxons of the eighth and ninth centuries. All works of Anglo-Saxon poetry, which reached to us written in the ancient Germanic alliterative verse, was used not only in the Anglo-Saxon, but also in the ancient upper-Germanic and Old Scandinavian poetry between eighth and thirteenth centuries. Alliterative technique of “Beowulf” is different. In addition, other characteristics of the style of the poem are connected with it: string of synonyms, and the frequent use of “metaphors”<sup>1</sup>. Abundance of metaphors is one of the features of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, and brings it closer to the Scandinavian poetry. The poet always prefer to say “the tree of joy” for “harp”, “son of a hammer” for “sword”, “sea road” or “swan road” for “sea” etc:

“Whose soldiers are you,  
You who’ve been carried in your deep-keeled ship  
Across the *sea-road* to this country of mine?”<sup>2</sup>

The devices, such as metaphors make the poem more efficient and successful. In this sense, a stylistic technique of “Beowulf” is designed brilliantly. It was widely spread in the ninth and tenth centuries in a number of manuscripts. In various works of the Anglo-Saxon literature, we can see traces of its influence, for example, the poem “The Fates of the Apostles” by Cynewulf, which has a textual borrowing from “Beowulf”. If Cynewulf was mentioned, that is worth noting about him and other medieval poets.

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<sup>1</sup> “A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison” (“Partner’s in Thought Working with Unformulated Experience, Discussions, and Enactment” p.131, 1.3-5, Donnel B. Stern, New York 2009)

<sup>2</sup> “Beowulf” translated by Button Raffel, p.29, l. 152-154, “Prentice Hall Literature”. English Tradition 1989.

The names of most medieval poets and their works are unknown to us. Only names of two of those early poets Caedmon and Cynewulf have reached our days. Caedmon was a poet of the seventh century. In those years, besides pagan views, religion was Christian and works were written in the monasteries. Caedmon considered as the first Christian writer. It is clearly seen from his works that they were paraphrased into Anglo-Saxon, including some parts of the Bible. Besides it, Caedmon composed religious hymns and poems. The following lines from his hymn are considered his first work:

Now must we worship the heaven-realm's Warder,  
The Maker's might and his mind's thought,  
The glory-father's work as he every wonder,  
Lord everlasting, of old established.<sup>1</sup>

This hymn is a modern translation. In this verse, Caedmon hails people to worship the God. It proves once again that Caedmon's works had religious character. If we list the writers and poets due in consecutive order, then next medieval poet should be Cynewulf. He also was a monk. Cynewulf's characteristic feature was in that he always signed his name in the last line of his work. Like Caedmon, Cynewulf wrote his poems in Anglo-Saxon. He is the author of several religious poems. Cynewulf often wrote about Christ, Christian Apostles. Cynewulf was popular especially for his two poems: "Elene"<sup>2</sup> and "Juliana"<sup>3</sup>. These works are considered to introduce first Anglo-Saxon women characters.

Besides a religious poetry, the worldly or secular poetry was spread among them as well. There included folk tales such as war songs, death songs, feast songs, the songs connecting with the arid, they called ploughing songs and riddles as well. The interesting among these songs were wedding songs. They were created in the form of verse. Generally, most of all folk tales were in the verse form and created by poets. Wedding songs were sung during wedding ceremonies which held in monasteries. It is interesting that this tradition remains today. The songs that were sung in different places were prohibited by the church in the eleventh century.

Beginning from the twelfth century to the thirteenth century the medieval literature was famous with the romances. "The medieval romance is a narrative about knightly prowess and adventure."<sup>4</sup> The special character of romances based on description of the ideal chivalry, the courtly love, the fights of knights, their love to ladies, praising kings etc. First romances

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<sup>1</sup> "A history of English literature". Chapter I. Period I. The Britons and the Anglo-Saxons. To A.D. 1066, p.25, 1.20-23, Robert Huntington Fletcher 1918.

<sup>2</sup> The longest Old English poem written by Cynewulf

<sup>3</sup> The second longest Old English poem written by Cynewulf

<sup>4</sup> "Romances: General" in Manual, Volume I, p.11, 1.1-2, Albert C. Baugh, 1967

were written in verse, but later they were written in prose. The popularity of romances is in their marvelous description of the medieval castle life. While reading any romance, you can find yourself in the middle ages. Perhaps it is an imagination, but due to a glamorous description, it seems far from any fantasy. The portraits of knights, the festivals, feasts, dancing, jugglers, beautiful ladies etc. show the image of medieval life. The storytellers of romances differed from others. They were professional storytellers who were in inns or taverns, or in noble households. Due to the development of literature, the romances have reached today in written forms. However, we know that before the written form of literature, ancient (Anglo-Saxon) little poems, songs, ballads were spread from mouth to mouth, from generation to generation.

First romances were in Norman French. It is said that the story which romances took their origin came from old French sources and they all were in Romanic dialect. Considering this main reason, such works were called “romances”. Romances were brought to England by *trouvers*<sup>1</sup>. They were poets of middle ages and came with the Norman invaders during the Conquest in the eleventh century. Nevertheless, in England *trouvers* were called *minstrels*<sup>2</sup>. Walking from village to village, from town to town, they composed different types of romances. Then these poets gave their place to the storytellers who were much more professional than minstrels were, as it was mentioned above.

The first romances were dedicated to castle life-lords and ladies or to the rich people, nobles of that time. Mostly in all romances, the theme of love retains its courtly character and men’s worship to their women. The poets created this popular theme in the twelfth century. Besides a love theme, gradually, there emerges a medieval religion. We can rarely observe in medieval romances the theme of religion, though the Church had a great influence on the literature in the Middle Ages. Generally, the most part of the medieval romances are immature, because the creator of the romances used the similar themes, purposes, conclusions or ordinary types of forms. Some of them carried features of adventure or the main heroes were knights and the themes were love between lord and ladies or wars between countries etc. However, medieval romances had advantages as well. For example, there were authors who were masters of narrative; they possessed ideal feelings and emotions, which was felt in their romances. They wrote about love in such way that the reader could analyze it as the true sense. Such and other things influenced the development of modern fiction.

According to the theme and aim, romances can be summarized under four types. First type is love romances, which take their origin from earlier French epics. The second is

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<sup>1</sup> “Trouver” French word - finder

<sup>2</sup> Minstrels- medieval wandering poets or singers

classical romances. This type of romances mainly deals with Alexander of the Great attainments and the tragic collapse of Troy. The third type is about the Arthurian romances, which are more popular. Finally in the fourth place are romances about native English heroes. For example, "King Horn" and "Havelock"<sup>1</sup> which deal with the real life of common medieval people. As it was mentioned, the third type is more popular and important. These romances belong to medieval English literature and are about British history. The period of Arthurian romances begins from the Anglo-Saxon's invasion of Britain. Romances are rich in historical events. Nevertheless, when they happened is very little known. The main hero of these romances was Arthur. Even the existence of the hero is unknown to us. About the events and the Anglo-Saxons invasion was written by Gildas, nearly in 550. He was a priest and wrote his pamphlet in Latin. His work, "the Destruction and Conquest of Britain" introduces us how he calls his compatriots to unite against the Saxons but Gildas describes a little about happening event. He wrote only invitations of the Anglo-Saxons by a British king in order to form allies against Scots and their ally to them. Gildas also describes how this ally soon became against the Britons themselves and how put the end to this internal war by Aurelianus or a man of Roman race. About 200 years later, after Gildas' work, appears another work, which was written by Nennius and called "Historia Britonum" ("The history of the Britons"). The information in Nennius' work is broader than Gildas. If Gildas' work was only about narrower description of the Anglo-Saxon wars, next writer added traditions, life, natural love etc. He gave the names of Saxons leaders such as Hengist and Horsa betrayed British king Vortigern. The interesting thing was that Nennius described Gildas' hero, Aurelianus as the magician Merlin. It cannot be thought that Gildas' work could be included into Arthurian romances but Nennius' could. In his work, Nennius mentioned about Arthur. Even according to some historical sources, this was the earliest thoughts about Arthur. He was described in his work as a fighter against the Saxons with the British kings but he also was a head in these battles. It is not easy to find out that all these events, which Nennius described, were true. Perhaps, all these were the fictions by the Britons themselves in order to create an ideal hero. However, it is obvious that there was a local leader who fought against Saxons and later organized to group thousand of warriors under his command. However, the name Arthur existed or not, remains controversial today. Then, how could other romances be created under the name of Arthur after several centuries? Perhaps the answer to this question could prove the existence of Arthur.

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<sup>1</sup> "King Horn" and "Havelock", the thirteenth century medieval chivalric romances



In the eleventh century about three hundred years after Gildas and Nennius works, there still were romances about Arthur. This time they were written by Welsh people. There was an important change about Arthur position. Before eleventh century, the romances told a little about him only as a battle leader. However, Welsh people described Arthur as the invincible hero of Britain, especially of Welsh. The mystical features were added to these romances. For example, Arthur had a magic sword and it was called Excalibur. Only Arthur could take his sword from inside of the stone. The magic power of the sword made him stronger to defeat his enemies and protect his country and nation. The Welsh believed that Arthur did not die and one day he will come back from the “Other World” in order to fight for his people. Until twelfth century, by means of development of writing Arthurian romances across the all Western Europe, Arthur became an unconquerable Christian hero.

The tradition describing Britons in the works was continued by Geoffrey of Monmouth<sup>1</sup>. He was Welsh. Unlike his former descendants, Geoffrey was a religious researcher and he wanted to make himself a very popular writer. According to his intention, he collected all useful information about the ancient history of Britain. Geoffrey also imitated the historical chronicles from former writers. He added his work all mixed materials such as traditional, daily life, historical, mysterious, legendary etc. into his work, which he found from any hand. This work was a “History of Britons” which he wrote in 1136. The name of hero, Arthur was found in his work too. Geoffrey used basic information from Gildas and Nennius and from Welsh people in order to write about Arthur. In his history, Arthur was described with his father King Uther and how they fought against the Saxons. Geoffrey gave a detailed description of Arthur’s invasion of all Western Europe. Geoffrey’s approach to Arthurian period differs from former writers. He compared Arthur’s reign with the feudal chivalry. It is not surprising, because he lived in the period when that ruling class was feudal. It should be mentioned that perhaps, Geoffrey’s work did not take into account seriously by some historians, but it is fact, his work remains one of the sources, which readers still apply to get information about ancient Britain. Several years after Geoffrey, the historical and literary chronicles were passed from one romancer to another. The poet Wace<sup>2</sup> applied to Geoffrey’s history after twenty years. He just paraphrased his work, but now in distinct, smooth, prolonged form than previous. Wace did an important step in his work. He mentioned of the “Round Table”, which was one of the old and important elements of Welsh tradition. However, Geoffrey forgot to write about this tradition. It was element of “equality”. All men were equal and had an equal right. Sitting around round table showed that no one differed

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<sup>1</sup> A medieval cleric (1100-1155)

<sup>2</sup> A Medieval Norman poet (1110-1174)

from another by his or her places. Thomas Malory used the element of the Round Table after three centuries. In the 60's of the fifteenth century Thomas Malory collected, systematized and processed the Arthurian cycle of novels. He told the content in the book "The Death of Arthur" ("La Morte d'Arthur"), which in 1485 was published by the publisher, Caxton and immediately became popular. It is significant not only for its complete form about Arthur and for his knights, but also it is considered the most important prose in English. "Malory was the first writer to make prose as sensitive an instrument of narrative as English poetry had always been."<sup>1</sup> Malory's book is considered the most significant work of English drama, which a detailed description would be depicted later.

The first chapter of MA dissertation dealt with Layamon's work, as well as stories about the Normans. The work "Brut" written by him nearly in 1200 is the chronicle and the paraphrased form of Wace's paraphrase of Geoffrey. In medieval English literature, this work is considered the first work where the author describes how the local inhabitants of Britain revived after the Norman Conquest. Besides other works, Layamon's work did not influence on the medieval English literature and the Arthurian romances. Because, the language of this work was Saxon and English people had difficulty to read it as they read only in Latin and Norman French. (The most reading or educated class are meant). Besides verse romances, there appeared prose romances. These romances were formless; they consisted of little successive stories and were written according to professional imagination of writers, for example, the Holy Grail. Generally, it was a legend.

The ideals of feudal society were reflected in the tales of chivalry. The first English romances of chivalry appeared in the thirteenth century. Again, the name of the main theme was Arthur. The source of chivalry of King Arthur was Celtic legends. Semi-legendary character became the subject of many medieval legends. The image of King Arthur joined a large series of chivalry, transforming and changing in different historical epochs. The subject of the legends of King Arthur were combined in the romances such as "Arthur", "Arthur and Merlin", "Lancelot Lake" etc. Legends about his exploits have been popular not only in the chivalric, but also in the national environment. It was believed that King Arthur would rise from the grave and come back to the earth. The glorious legends of King Arthur and his Knights were related stories of many French and English romances. They tell us how Arthur possessed a magic sword and how he conquered many lands with this sword and his marriage to the beautiful Geneva and how the "Round Table" in a huge banquet hall gathered knights in his castle Camelot, as well as his victories, exploits and battles. There were the heroes-the

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<sup>1</sup> "Poetry in English; An Anthology". Oxford University, M.L.Rosenthal 1987. p.345, l.28-29

knights of the king Arthur in chivalric romances. Among them were Sir Lancelot Lake, Sir Gawain, and a knight Perceval.

The masterpiece chivalry romance of the Middle Ages is considered "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight". The author is unknown but the manuscript that kept in the British Museum gives us to know about author's life and literary activity. Perhaps he lived a century later after Layamon and perhaps little earlier than Chaucer's time. Perhaps, he lived in northwest part of England and according to dialect and the form of the romance he lived during the Chaucer's time, because he used the same forms of writing, for instance, alliterative verse as Chaucer. From the following extract of the romance the alliteration is clearly felt:

"This rider reined in as he rode through the doors  
direct to the high dais<sup>1</sup> without a word,  
giving no greeting, gazing down on them all.  
His first word came when he stopped. "Where" he said."<sup>2</sup>

In the first line the repetition of the consonants "h", then, in the third "g" etc. Using alliterative verse, author makes his work more fascinating in order to read and easily understand. The story consists of two folk-tales and shorter religious poems. These folk tales are in the form of Arthurian romances.

The plot elements date back many centuries ago. The name of this romance is the names of knights of King Arthur's Round Table. The heroes of this poetic work are brave, which put above all the honor and dignity of knighthood. Violation of word is treated as unauthorized and improper and knights fought on the establishing rules of conduct. The main conflict involves a violation of the narrative speech by Sir Gawain and his subsequent deep remorse. This medieval romance differs from other Arthurian romances due to its setting. The events in most Arthurian romances happened in Camelot<sup>3</sup> especially in spring or summer. But in this romance the events and adventures took place in cold winter. For example, the work begins during New Year's Eve feast at Camelot. On the other hand, the arrival of mysterious Green Knight was at Christmas in the midst of winter etc. "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" is considered the pearl of the medieval English literature and the longest romance in which the leading and active character is Gawain. The direct source of this romance is unknown. Perhaps, the author included various stories in order to make his romance more attractive. It would be rather logical to point out that post medieval authors will continue the tradition of

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<sup>1</sup> platform

<sup>2</sup> "Christmas in Camelot", "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" section 10, l. 175-178. (translated by Paul Deane, 1999)

<sup>3</sup> Legendary castle of King Arthur

composing medieval romances. However, before it there would appear such writers and poets that, they would contribute their works to the development of medieval English literature. For instance, William Caxton's invention of new type of printing influenced on the literature. He printed a series of verses and it showed that poetry had an important place during later Middle Ages. Many poets emerged those years, but most of them were unknown. Only their works have reached our days without any reliable information. Medieval period of English literature is almost recognized by two important poets. William Langland and Geoffrey Chaucer are known as "key poets" living during later Middle Ages. The changes and growth of English literature and language were now felt in their works.

William Langland is known for his allegorical poem "Piers Plowman" ("The Vision of Peter Plowman", 1362), the largest monument of moral and didactic poetry of the fourteenth century. It is written in Middle English alliterative verse. Langland's product is organically linked with social movements of his time, the birth of a turbulent era of struggle. It raises the problem of social and ethical issues, reflects the suffering, hopes and aspirations of English peasantry. That is why "The Vision of Peter Plowman" was so popular among the people and other works of medieval literature. Based on the country life, the poem of Langland became a fact of the national consciousness. About the author of the poem, little is known. Peasant by birth, he had a church education, lived in poverty, held independently. In his own words, he was "too tall to bend down low". Langland denounced his contemporary social order and delivered as a preacher of the new way of life. Langland's poem belongs to a very popular genre in the Middle Ages, to "visions". The allegorical nature of the poem allows the author to talk about abstract concepts, addressing very specific images that embody the concepts of truth, justice, conscience, and the wisdom of the evil in the images of human beings, endowed with such characteristics that are peculiar to certain social strata of society. However, the actors are not only personified abstractions in the poem, and its central character Peter Plowman is a seeker of truth and justice. He is an image of reality itself, endowed with very specific signs of the English farmer of the fourteenth century. The name of Peter Plowman became a household name for many years, associated with the representation of a man, a hard worker.

The poem consists of two parts and includes eleven "visions", which precede a prologue. The first part is about the pilgrimage of people who are in search of Truth, in the second part the acts of allegorical characters are depicted, each of them tells the story of their life. In the "Prologue", the author tells of a dream, which he once dreamed up. Walking and being tired, he lay down to rest on the slope of a hill and saw a dream: "Great field, full of

people. There were people who were rich and poor, they were working and traveling. Some went to the plow, they were rarely indulging in fun, some of them were planting and sowing, and they did very hard work. On one side of the field, there was a skillfully constructed tower, and in a deep valley, you could see the dark prison". It was like the painted picture - an allegory of life. "The field in which full of people" describes humanity, the tower is the abode of the Truth, and a dark prison describes the residence of an evil. Allegorical image created by Langland, is impressive because it is filled with a very specific meaning. It is not just about humanity in general, but about the people with very specific era of their lives, with all features of its structure. There gathered people with all occupations in the field: here are ploughmen, and merchants, and knights and priests, monks, and then there are the poor, vagrants and hermits, bishops and pilgrims. Describing each of them, the poet finds certain expressions in order to make bright and accurate comparisons. Analyzing W. Langland's work, many scholars approach to his work from different sides. However, the main concept is the same, only naming could be different. For example, historian Robert H. Fletcher calls "field with full of people" as "field of folk":

"Society in all its various classes and occupations is very dramatically presented in the brief description of the 'field of folk,' with incisive passing satire of the sins and vices of each class. "Gluttonous wasters" are there, lazy beggars, lying pilgrims, corrupt friars and pardoners, venal lawyers, and, with a lively touch of realistic humor, cooks and their 'knaves' crying, 'Hot pies!' But a sane balance is preserved--there are also worthy people, faithful laborers, honest merchants, and sincere priests and monks"<sup>1</sup>

The allegoric approach by Langland to "visions" should be interesting for discussing. In the first "vision", he described a beautiful woman, dressed in a simple linen garment. It is the "Holy Church", and she enters into a conversation with the poet and tells him that the most valuable treasure in the world is Truth. The assistants of Truth are Love and Conscience. The rivals and enemies of these Holies will appear in the poem such as Lie, Flattery, Treachery, and Bribe. Bribe appears in the second vision, "dressed in furs which are the most beautiful on the earth, topped by a crown, even which any king could have and her fingers studded with rings". She is able to captivate all who see her. A description of the wedding of Bribe and Lie is also interesting. In this ceremony, many people such as court judges and bailiffs, sheriffs and retail brokers, lawyers, provisions buyers, sellers of food supplies were gathered. Langland accurately gives a detailed description of clerical style of his era. For example, he shows that after their marriage, Bribe and Lie got right to despise poverty, to

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<sup>1</sup> "A history of English Literature", Chapter III. Period III. The End of the middle ages. Robert Huntington Fletcher. 1918

slander, to boast and commit perjury, to lie, swearing and break the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup> However, their marriage did not take place. Theology speaks against them, and the king suggests Bribe to marry a knight, who strongly objected it. Author uses a number of other allegorical figures such as Peace, Wisdom, Intelligence, and False.

William Langland's poetic skill created other allegorical participants as seven deadly sins on the confessional scene of his work. They were Pride, Intemperance, Envy, Anger, Greed, Gluttony and Sloth. Each of these figures represents a specific defect in the form of a living person to the reader, the shape of which is outlined clearly and convincingly. Here, for example, Envy is pale, as if stricken with paralysis, with pallid cheeks and swollen body with anger, biting his lips and clenched his fists. The poem is connected with the different episodes. The main aim in each episode is to find Truth. The people gathered in the field searching Truth by means of challenge of Intelligence. However, they do not know the direct way to Truth, among them only Piers Plowman knows it. Conscience helps him to find the way to home of Truth. Generally, this poem reveals the thought, as "a person who works hard knows the right way of the life".

As in many other works of medieval period, allegorical poem by Langland embodied in its striking images of reality. Abstract concepts are reflected with very specific terms. The symbolism<sup>2</sup> of the image does not exclude visibility, but organically merges with it. He managed to describe medieval shortages with great professionalism. Thanks to his allegorical figures, the reader can analyze and comprehend not only the disadvantages and advantages of medieval period but also a real life. Subsequent writers and poets benefited from his work in their writings and it made their works more readable because of the description of reality and intentions of common people. Robert H. Fletcher wrote:

"In its own age the influence of 'Piers the Plowman' was very great. Despite its intended impartiality, it was inevitably adopted as a partisan document by the poor and oppressed, and together with the revolutionary songs of John Ball, it became a powerful incentive to the Peasant's Insurrection. Piers himself became and continued an ideal for men who longed for a less selfish and brutal world, and a century and a half later the poem was still cherished by the Protestants for its exposure of the vices of the Church. Its medieval form and setting remove it hopelessly beyond the horizon of general readers of the present time, yet it furnishes the most detailed remaining picture of the actual social and economic conditions

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<sup>1</sup> The laws of the Bible

<sup>2</sup> The practice of representing things by means of symbols or of attributing symbolic meanings or significance to objects, events, or relationships. ("Webster's II New College Dictionary", p.1143, 1.64-66, third edition, USA 2005)

of its age, and as a great landmark in the progress of moral and social thought it can never lose its significance”.<sup>1</sup>

Langland's skillfully description of imagined world continued to be used in his contemporaries' writings. For instance, the work "Mandeville's Voyage" is one of the literary works of medieval period where an imaginary world is described. This work is considered a compilation work. Perhaps, the author took the source from Langland's work, or may not. But unlike William Langland's poem, this prose doesn't include social and moral problems of medieval period as in "Piers Plowman". It has entertaining features. This work was written down nearly in 1370. It was after Langland's allegorical work, because he wrote it nearly in 1367. "Mandeville's Voyage" was written in French and it is said that it was written at Belgium. This work gained more popularity and translated into different languages such as Latin, English etc. The author of this work is unknown. Some scholars consider that Sir John Mandeville never existed. All his journeys and the imaginary world, which he describes, are taken from other sources. The work consists of various tales told by Ethiopian John who describes the world where diamonds could be grown by proper care, and where the trees had lamb fruits. In this work, the answer is given to debatable problem of those years about the earth's form, whether it was flat or round. The unknown author managed in attracting reader's attention from the first time of reading. The simplicity of this prose attracts every reader during reading. It would be rather logical to note that "Mandeville's Voyage" is remarkable as the first prose work in English literature written after the Norman Conquest. However, it considered the first, not for religious admonition, but for entertaining feature.

After this work, many writers or poets addressed to the theme of an imaginary world. But it was in different stages of the literature development. After an unknown writer, the medieval period of English literature met a new figure. He was Geoffrey Chaucer. It is obvious that "Mandeville" could not be compared with his contemporaries, especially with G. Chaucer.

Poet, opening new horizons for the future development of English literature, was Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer is considered "the father of English language and founder of realism", besides it his creativity is also marked in literary history of England as the transition from the Middle Ages to Renaissance, the approval of new images of life and principles of disclosure of a human character. Largely due to the tradition of culture of the Middle Ages, which reflected its best achievements and especially Chaucer's creativity brings the ideas of

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<sup>1</sup> "A history of English Literature", Chapter III. Period III. The End of the middle ages. Robert Huntington Fletcher. 1918

humanism and free thought and characteristic feature for the coming period of Renaissance. This writer was a harbinger in English literature. Perceiving the tradition of medieval art, Chaucer reviewed and revised them in accordance with his usual broad view of the world and man. For him medieval schematics were unacceptable. He claims a man's right to earthly happiness; admire his intelligence and energy, praising his quick wit and love of life. The sense of life in all forms and constant manifestation to the justice of life was characteristic to Chaucer.

Canons of medieval poetry are not deep for Chaucer. Rejecting the alliterative verse, he developed the foundations of English syllabic-tonic versification. It was boring for him around existing genre forms (allegorical and didactic poem-“vision”), and due to the experience of contemporary Italian and French writers, he enriched English literature with new genres, bringing them into the development of many independent and original forms (psychological novel in verse, verse short story, an ode). Chaucer puts the foundation of satirical tradition in the literature of England. Degrees of his laughter vary from harmless jokes, sly mockeries to bold and daring attacks on conviction, from a witty allusion to the rough comedy. Chaucer can be a refined, gallant and straightforwardly honest. Knowledge of life allows him to talk about people's whole truth, to portray their vices and virtues, high gusts and low aspirations. Chaucer's creativity was connected to the national life of England with all his roots. These accounts show that he wrote only in English (based on its London dialect), though perfectly knew Latin, French, and Italian. Chaucer made a major contribution to the development of English language.

No doubt that each period of literature is known for its famous poets or writers together with their works. While speaking about medieval period of English literature, first Geoffrey Chaucer comes to our mind. Considering him as the main figure of the medieval literature, there should be given information about his life. Who was a poet that depicted magnificent portrait of life in later middle Ages in England?

The poet's biography helps us to discover many things about his literary activities. Chaucer was born in London, in the family of a wealthy wine merchant. When he was a child, he has been appointed in the court as a page<sup>1</sup>. Here he did various things as a humble; even in order to entertain court's employees, he became recognized as a fluent storyteller. He was in the atmosphere of French language and French culture. In his youth, Chaucer took part in two campaigns in France. In the first one (1359), he was taken prisoner by the French. Back to

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<sup>1</sup> Page- a medieval boy who performed different work in the household of the court



London, after his release he became king's own servant and promoted to the rank of esquire<sup>1</sup>. Later, he held positions, which were very important. Beginning from 1370, Chaucer was in various diplomatic missions in France and Italy. He plunged into the atmosphere of life and culture of the most developed European countries at that time. Chaucer was fond of literature. He was familiar with Latin writings of medieval authors and read contemporary French poets. Chaucer visited Italy twice. The works by Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch were well known to him, and their impact on the literary activities of the English poet was significant. When he came back to his country Chaucer was appointed as a controller of customs at the Port of London. The period during 1374-1386 was the most important moments in his creativity. He combined his job of a custom controller with his literary studies. The periods of temporary prosperity in the life of Chaucer faced with failures and moral troubles. He knew wealth and poverty; was familiar not only with the life of the court, but also with the inhabitants of the poor farms. Chaucer held high office, but court intrigues and unexpected death of an influential patron deprived of his position and salaries. He was a judge and a member of parliament, the caretaker of the royal estates and overseer of the shafts, drains, sewers and bridges along the Thames. After the assuming the throne by the king Henry IV, Chaucer reinstated in his former jobs, but his sudden death in 1400 left these positions empty for some time. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. His grave was the first where later would be became the Poets` Corner. England mourned of their great poet. Chaucer died but left a great treasure after himself. Chaucer's treasure, opened new pages for English literature.

Chaucer's poetic heritage is vast and diverse. It includes works that are closely related to the literary tradition of the Middle Ages. He translated French allegorical narrative poem "The Romance of the Rose"<sup>2</sup> into English. This poem is a very important medieval satirical allegory dealing with medieval love and religion. He wrote works in the form of medieval "vision" such as "Book of the Duchess" in 1369, "The House of Fame" in 1379-1384, and "Parliament of Fowls" in 1377-1382. The content of these poems associated with a court life. Depending on his life in different countries, Chaucer's literary activity is rich in various themes and genres. It was expressed in his poems. According to this approach, his poetry could be divided into three periods. During his diplomatic missions in France, he wrote many poems. These poems belong to the first period. Most of his poems were written in France and some part of them in England. Though he wrote in English, the poetry and culture of France influenced on his works. Chaucer also translated some medieval French verse writings of French poets. For instance, the above-mentioned poem "The Romance of the Rose"

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<sup>1</sup> Esquire- honorary title in England

<sup>2</sup> The thirteenth century French poem written by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun

influenced the poet's mind that later he created a series of such poems. The second period of poet's poetry belongs to his visits to Italy during 1372-1373. No doubt, Chaucer met here his contemporary Italian poet Petrarch and acquaintance with Italian life and culture influenced his later activity. After five years later, he had another visit to Italy, and this time, the impressive influence of Petrarch, Boccaccio was felt in his poetry. For example, He created one of the best works of this period, "Troilus and Criseyde" based on the work by Boccaccio.

Motive for the poem "Troilus and Criseyde" (1372-1384) was the poem "Philostratus" by Boccaccio. It is a long poem dealing with the classical antiquity, the sentiment and tragedy of love and hero's psychology. Turning to the form of the novel in verse, Chaucer tells the love story of Priam's son Troilus to Criseyde and her betray. The subtle delights of their love relationships ended in Criseyde's treason and Troilus's death in battle. Develop of a sense described in all its complexity. Chaucer's heroes are real people, not conventional figures, they dressed in ancient robes, and they think and feel as if they are contemporaries of Chaucer in England in the fourteenth century. In this poem, Chaucer's peculiar skill of character creation emerged. However, the new term characterization was used in his next masterpiece. Chaucer addressed Boccaccio's creativity very often. From the works of Boccaccio "Decameron" and "Tezeida", he borrows the stories and characters for his "Canterbury Tales". However, when compared Chaucer with Boccaccio there were found significant difference: the main thing in Boccaccio's work are the plot and action, but in Chaucer's work main thing is the character's feature. Boccaccio puts the foundation of the narrative art of Renaissance; Chaucer's works give introduction to the beginnings of dramatic art. Finally, poet's third period is called English period of his literary creativity. Here is included his last fifteen years of activity. In this period all his works are produced independently, with own thoughts, free views, self-sufficient manners. "The Legend of Good Women" belongs to this period. It was written in 1385 and consists of a series of romantic biographies of outstanding women of antiquity. It deals with classical legends where Chaucer describes them as the victims of love. The fact, which is the focus of attention of this work, is that, allegory and symbols are not used. It proves that, Chaucer wrote this work with his own ideas.

The main work of this period written by Chaucer is "The Canterbury Tales" which considered as a major work in the history of English literature, and marked a turning point in its development. The work was written down in 1387-1400. Chaucer began to work on it beginning from the middle 80s, but his plan to finish it in time was didn't turned out. However, in its present form, the book has internal integrity. The historian Matthew B. Goldie writes:

“The “*Canterbury Tales*” survives in 82 manuscripts, 55 of which are complete or near complete. Chaucer wrote the *Tales* between 1387 and 1400, but no manuscript survives from his lifetime (1343-1400). Only about a third of the manuscripts are illuminated...”<sup>1</sup>

Chaucer created broad and vivid picture of contemporary England, presenting it in the gallery of living and complete image. The work consists of tales, partly verse and partly prose, told by pilgrims. The intention of Chaucer was to write totally 124 stories, but his sudden death did not let him to complete his work. The poet could write only 24 stories. The book begins with the “General Prologue”, where the shape of each character is outlined. One spring day in the tavern “Tabard” in Southwark (a suburb of London) pilgrims were gathered and were ready to go to worship the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury. The travelers going to Canterbury chose the owner of tavern Harry Bailey as their leader during a pilgrimage. Tavern owner offers pilgrims telling amusing stories while going to Canterbury and come back. They would revive their traveling with the stories told by them. Each pilgrim should tell two stories during half of their traveling. One of the pilgrims is Chaucer himself:

“It happened in tat season that one day  
In Southwark, at The Tabard, as I lay  
Ready to go on pilgrimage and start  
For Canterbury, most devout at heart...”<sup>2</sup>

They are people from different parts of England, belonging to different classes. Here are a knight, a monk, a lawyer, a merchant, a student, a cook, a miller, a chaplain, a worthy woman from Bath, and many others. In the “General Prologue”, Chaucer reveals a compositional principle.

Chaucer’s work consists of such stories, which each of them is a complete poetic short story. In this case, Chaucer used compositional principle of “Decameron”<sup>3</sup> by Boccaccio, which established in the European literature and accepted as the scene-framing book of short stories. However, it must be noted that the “*Canterbury Tales*”, a characteristic of the organic interaction “framework narrative” with the content of stories told by pilgrims. A frame story means a story that includes or frames another story or stories. The pilgrimage was described as the frame. The stories should be 124 and told by pilgrims as mentioned above. Chaucer planned to complete this round trip with short stories when they returned from a long journey. Unfortunately, Chaucer could not complete his frame story because of his death. However, Chaucer first used this type of verse in England, but he did not invent it. The poet had

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<sup>1</sup> “Middle English Literature” (A historical sourcebook) Images, p.137, l.1-4, Matthew Boyd Goldie, UK 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The Prologue, The *Canterbury Tales*” l.20 translated by Nevill Coghill

<sup>3</sup> “Decameron” – “Ten days of story telling”

borrowed it from French poetry. The same form as the frame was used centuries ago in “The Thousand and One Nights” by unknown author. His Italian contemporary Boccaccio has used this structure in his work that mentioned above as well. However, the sharp distinction between two poets` works should be pointed. Boccaccio`s work introduces us about men and women`s agony of plague in Florence. However, the pilgrims of Chaucer`s work are joyful. Chaucer himself introduces the serious problems told by each pilgrim; perhaps all of them have a conventional meaning. “The Canterbury Tales” is characterized as turning point of all medieval period. The feudal system was going to disintegrate. Concussions which Britain experienced during the fourteenth century, made think about their causes. The violence and groundlessness, lawlessness and greed were heard in the speeches of Chaucer`s characters. Monks, bailiffs from ecclesiastical court and vicars are busy with violence. In the story, the police officer is described as “an angry monarch”. “The Canterbury Tales” resembles “visions of Peter Plowman” written by Langland. However, there is distinction between their thoughts. Chaucer reflected a higher level of consciousness of the medieval common people. If in Langland`s poem the hope of the justice is related to trust in the mercy of God, Chaucer believes in an earthly man, and reveals the richness of his nature, paving the way to Renaissance literature with his works.

“The Canterbury Tales” stands in the first place among the world`s finest works. This story depicts a real life of the fourteenth century of England. Generally, the stories told by each pilgrim, reveals the inner world of medieval period. Superiorities and shortcomings of medieval social life are professionally depicted. Actually, Chaucer gathers people from the three main part of medieval society. They are the church, the court, and the common people. Pilgrims are from different classes, from feudalism structure who are a squire, a knight etc, from more open classes in the cities such as a merchant, an innkeeper, and from the powerful church as a nun, a friar etc. All these individuals are described in the Prologue. Chaucer gave characteristic descriptions of these pilgrims carefully and with all details. For example, if somebody wants to know any medieval profession belonging to any class, it would be enough to read about his “Tales”. Thanks to his marvelous description of all classes of society, it satisfies reader to feel himself, or herself, as if he or she is in the Middle Ages. Every author has own style to create his or her works. In his “The Canterbury Tales”, besides the form of frame story, Chaucer opened a new page in the history of English literature by means of his “characterization”.<sup>1</sup> The poet used the method of characterization in order to give detailed information, and to mark special features of any individual in his works. For instance, the

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<sup>1</sup> Characterization refers to the personality of a fictional character as well as to the methods by which a writer crates that personality. (“Prentice Hall Literature” The English Tradition. 1989. p.90, l. 1-3)

Prologue is remarkable because of introducing all pilgrims with their particular peculiarities. We know that authors use different types of characterization. Some of them may be direct statement about an individual, other may be to reveal character in indirect way, it may be through thoughts, emotions, actions, or speeches of heroes etc. On the other hand, another way of revealing personality of a character is to make comments by others, or even the appearance of characters reveals their personality. It is interesting to note that, some authors use only one of these ways, but sometimes they all are used to depict a strong image of any character. In his work, the poet used almost all of characterization methods, especially, the way of describing appearance and character's speech. For example, the description of appearance of a "merchant" tells us, how a medieval merchant was:

"There was a merchant with forking beard  
And motley dress; high on his horse he sat,  
Upon his head a Flemish<sup>1</sup> beaver hat  
And on his feet daintily buckled boots." <sup>2</sup>

These lines reflect a medieval merchant and he became animated in front of our eyes. From his appearance, especially from his dress, it is enough to understand that he is a merchant. Perhaps he is a cloth trader, because he dressed so accurately that only a professional trader could choose an original beaver hat. Especially it was a Flemish hat, which probably he brought it for himself. The merchant that Chaucer described was informed in a subtle thing that any specialist merchant could be. For instance, besides being a good trader he grasped all things quickly about money matters as if he was not a merchant but an expert. He traded in different countries repeatedly:

"... (He thought) upon the Harwich-Holland range<sup>3</sup>  
He was an expert at currency exchange."<sup>4</sup>

The real face of Chaucer's characters reveals by means of their problem. It was known that the merchant had debts but he concealed it in order not to lose his respect among his companions. Thus, he introduced himself as an estimable merchant:

"This estimable Merchant so had set  
His wits to work, none knew he was in debt  
He was so stately in negotiation,

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<sup>1</sup> From Flanders. A medieval county in Holland

<sup>2</sup> "The Prologue", "The Canterbury Tales" p.99, 1.280-284, translated by Nevill Coghill, "Prentice Hall Literature", English Tradition 1989

<sup>3</sup> The North Sea between England and Holland.

<sup>4</sup> "The Prologue", "The Canterbury Tales" p.103, 1.287-288, translated by Nevill Coghill, "Prentice Hall Literature", English Tradition 1989

Loan, bargain, and commercial obligation”<sup>1</sup>

In the Middle Ages the medical science didn't developed so far. The medicines were house made. Even most medieval doctors referred to stars, astronomy in order to define their patient's disease. Patients in order to recover, suffered for a long time due to doctors' ignorance, and in some cases, they even died. Gradually, watching the stars doctors became fortunetellers. They defined the best and the worst days of patients according to which they should attend. Fortune telling is still famous today. However, to believe or not of course, depends on a person. Chaucer's distinctiveness was in such things that he touched every detail of medieval period:

“He<sup>2</sup> watched his patient's favorable star  
And by his Natural Magic, knew what are,  
The lucky hours and planetary degrees  
For making charms and magic effigies.

Geoffrey Chaucer professionally depicted the portrait of social life of medieval England in this Prologue. The stories told by pilgrims belong to different genres of literature. Most of them are legends. Historian Ina Mititelu also touches upon different genres of stories told in “The Canterbury Tales”:

“They are further characterized by their stories, so that we get a panorama of medieval life as well as a survey of popular literary genres: fables, classical legends, lives of the saints, tales of chivalrous adventure as well as of decidedly unchivalrous erotic exploits”.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps one of the remarkable features of this work is in abundance of literary genres. If the poet wrote it in one genre, it would be boring and not interesting for reader to comprehend. Different genres, allow author to express his feelings and emotions about the settings and characters. Chaucer always touches vital problems. While describing the social life of his period by his characters, Chaucer's intention was not only to show shortcomings of real life, but also to take lesson from the defects of life. This intention could be accepted as warnings for future generations. Chaucer had a great sense of humor. However, he used the sharp satire in order to reveal characters' negative sides. For example, satirical description of merchant's self-praising, churchmen's corruption etc. On the other hand, Chaucer estimated the labor of characters such as a ploughman, an Oxford cleric, a cook etc.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Prologue”, “The Canterbury Tales” p.99, l.288-292, translated by Nevill Coghill, “Prentice Hall Literature”, English Tradition 1989

<sup>2</sup> Here “he” is a “doctor”

<sup>3</sup> “History of British literature from Origins to the Age of Reason” p. 15, Ina Mititelu 2010.

One of the interesting “Tales” is told by a pardoner.<sup>1</sup> This tale is known as “The Pardoner’s Tale”. This tale refers to the literary term “exemplum”. It is an anecdote with a brief account of an incident or event. It is like the sermons consisting of 238 lines and Pardoner calls it exemplum or example. The idea does not belong to Chaucer, it goes back to centuries ago and Pardoner uses this anecdote as an exemplum in order to prove the saying, “greed is the root of all evil”. The plot of the tale is one of the most useful subjects that influences on the behaviors of people. The main idea that Chaucer used in “the Pardoner’s Tale” is to show readers how the greed can destroy the whole life of any person. The poet explains that if a person cannot control his or her feelings and manage his or her greed, it will destroy only her or his own life. The person will be the victim of the evil. After the Knight, the Miller, the Nun, the Pardoner began retelling in order to entertain the others with his tale. His tale proves the claim that “greed is the root of all evil”. The tale begins with the three men sitting in the tavern having some drink. They saw from the window that some people carried a coffin. They were interested whose coffin it was and how the man died. One of these men called a serving boy of the tavern to ask. He answered he was a man who was drunk and found dead on his bench. A thief who was called Death killed him. He was unknown; nobody can see and find him. He killed thousands of people even in plague. He is around us, he can go everywhere, if somebody meets him, it would be better to worry and run. Even the tavern owner warned three men to be careful. Hearing these awful words, the men were worried but they were too interesting to find Death. One of them told that he was not afraid and wanted to search for an unknown thief, the other two joined him. They promised to find this traitor Death and kill him. From today, they swore to be brothers. On their way from miles away the village they met an old man. He was all wrapped, only eyes were seen. They asked why he was looked so, and it was time for him to pass away because he was too old. In his answer, an old man said that he was searching for a young who would change his youth to have his age. In addition, he said that only God could take his life, not even Death. However, three men did not believe in him, they consider he was a liar and the spy of Death who killed young people. They demanded an old man to tell the place where Death was. The answer by an old man was described as followings:

“Well, sirs”, he (an old man) said, if it be your design,  
To find out Death, turn out this crooked way  
Towards that grove, I left him there today  
Under a tree, and you’ll find him waiting.

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<sup>1</sup> The person who dispenses papal pardons.

He isn't one to hide for all you prating.  
You see that oak? He won't be far to find.  
And God protect you that redeemed mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

They left this old man on their way and began to run towards an oak tree. Instead of Death, they found golden coins on the ground. They were so marvelous, so bright that attracted all of them immediately. They sat around coins thoughtfully. One of them said that this treasure was their fortune, perhaps God blessed them and gave them a plenty of golden coins in order to live happily and with pleasure. It was a very successful day for them and this treasure, of course belonged to them. Nevertheless, they decided not to divide the coins in the day light, because if villagers see them, they would consider that they were robbers. They decided to wait until the night. They were too hungry and decided to send the youngest man to village to fetch some bread and drink. As soon as he had gone, the first sat down and told that the gold had to be divided between them equally. When the youngest man came back, they decided to kill him. He persuaded him that he was right and would not lie him. On the way to the village, the youngest one was thinking of the beauty of gold coins. He realized that he could possess not all treasure himself, if there were others. To kill them was impossible because they were two. He decided to poison his friends. He bought poison and put it into their drinks. When he came back, the two men attacked the youngest one and killed him. Being very happy that all treasure belonged only to them, they decided to celebrate their victory by eating and drinking. Unfortunately, they never thought that their happiness would not last long. They died by the affect of poison. They could not share the treasure due to their gluttony. The greediness ate their inner world and in order to possess completely gold, they killed one another. Perhaps, by means of an old man the Pardoner intended “the evil” that inspired three men to destroy one another. Geoffrey Chaucer’s intention was to warn every reader that nothing could be gained by greediness. It only carries a man to the bottom of the steep that a person can never survive. It ruins everything, an intention, a wish, a respect, a faith, a confidence, a pride, even a wit, generally all qualities connected with the human. Actually, “The Canterbury Tales” deals with the essential problems of social life of his period and comes up with the enlightenment with its educating tales.

In English literature, he always was compared with William Shakespeare. Because he went over his achievements, revived and developed English literature in his period. W. Shakespeare also opened a new page in the history of English literature. Chaucer has something common with writers and poets of subsequent periods. Chaucer’s poetry is

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<sup>1</sup> “The Pardoner’s Tale”, *The Canterbury Tales*, l.100-105 translated by Nevill Coghill



dramatic as well. His poetry deals with eccentric and different actions of life. Moreover, he reveals all reasons for love of the middle ages. He wrote his poems in such way that, a reader himself can make analyzes from the psychological point of view. His work “Troilus and Criseyde” can be a good example for it. A love tragedy, and psychological manners and thought of heroes are skillfully described. Chaucer managed writing this dramatic work with a great skill. It can be considered that, if Chaucer lived in the following periods after his period, where drama stood ahead of other literary genres, he would be a great dramatist.

The forms of his poems are so harmonious that while reading them a reader comprehends meaning immediately. As being abroad and being acquainted with literature and culture of foreign countries, his knowledge and life experience helps him to create such colorful and readable poems. The historian Robert H. Fletcher writes about Chaucer’s poetic form:

“Chaucer is an unerring master of poetic form. His stanza combinations reproduce all the well-proportioned grace of his French models, and to the pentameter-riming couplet of his later work, he gives the perfect ease and metrical variety, which matches the fluent thought. In all his poetry, there is probably not a single faulty line.”<sup>1</sup>

After his death, his contemporaries wanted to continue his way of activity. Nevertheless, from their works it is known that, until the Golden Age, the time of William Shakespeare, there was not a real poet or writer as Geoffrey Chaucer was. He was a master bringing the new literary forms and ways to English literature. By means of his literary activity, he brought a new breath, a new theme, which was followed by his contemporaries. It was a description of actual, real life. The medieval period of English literature did not begin with Geoffrey Chaucer. It only revived and gained a substantial change by his creativity. However, the end of the medieval literature closed by his literary activity. The literature lived its stable life until William Shakespeare came.

The medieval literature retained its colorfulness by other genres of folk poetry. They are ballads, which are one of the major parts of literature. Motifs, stories and images of folk art have entered the literature in early days of its existence. English literature has developed based on folk art. It enriched the tradition of heroic epics and folk songs, which were commonly used by people, especially they were found in legends. Even when written literature developed, folk poetry did not fade away and lose its value. It reflected the dreams and aspirations of the people and their protest against injustice.

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<sup>1</sup> “A history of English Literature”, Chapter III. Period III. The End of the middle ages. Robert Huntington Fletcher. 1918

Examples of folk art that created in England in the early middle Ages are not preserved in its entirety, but the monuments of folk poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries broadly represented. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are the period of prosperity in the English and Scottish folk poetry. The most spreading genres of it are songs and ballads. The definition of ballad is given differently in the various sources. In some books ballad is defined as one branch of folk literature, in another book as a short form of a poem, or as little songs passing from generation to generation etc. Following definition of a ballad allows to understand the meaning of it:

“Ballad is a narrative poem usually brief that is meant to be sung”.<sup>1</sup> According to this definition, it is clear that ballads are not too long as other forms of poem. They are in the form of short story dealing with various themes, which have a rhythmical effect. It is like the music.

Ballad is a song having a plot with dramatic content with choral refrains. Ballads meant for choral performance, accompanied by the musical instruments, dramatic play and dance. Ballad is the result of a collective of folk art; and it does not reflect any singer. In connection with this question of the individual authorship is not assigned. It means that the authors of ballads are not known. These ballads are turned to be as “folk ballads”. Sometimes such ballads are called “popular” or “traditional” ballads. All three names have the same roots, because the producer of such ballads is common people, they are known and made popular by those people and it is their tradition that ballads are passing from mouth to mouth, from generation to generation. The existence of earlier folk ballads is unknown to us, because there is no any signature of an author. That is why exact date about the first folk ballads existence remains unknown. However, all historians take approximate century as twelfth century and the place, which were bumpy boundaries between England and Scotland. And why those areas? We know that, the centre of Britain, especially England was developing day by day, new educational centers appeared and poets and writers appeared outside of the Church as well. Their writings helped for formation of written literature until Caxton invented a new type of printing. But Scottish-English border was aside of this development and people of this region did not use books and reading yet. Their contribution to English literature was to spread the ballads over Britain. Nobody wrote folk ballads, they were passed orally during many centuries. It is worth to point out that, ballads were not considered as one part of literature for a long time. Even writers, poets of the fourteenth century, did not use this form of poem in their works, whereas it was most productive century in English literature. Only,

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<sup>1</sup> “Prentice Hall Literature” The English Tradition, l. 2, p. 76 1989.

when Thomas Percy published his book, ballads were recognized as part of English literature and its legacy. However, it was in the eighteenth century in 1765 and published under the name "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry". Sir Walter Scott also was interested in old Scottish ballads and wrote his work about it. The third chapter of MA dissertation will cover the interrelationship between medieval ballads and W. Scott. English-Scottish ballads have not abolished yet. They came up to modern time. Thanks to authors' works of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the English-Scottish ballads exist. However, they differ from pre-existing ones. They are not as emotional and colorful as previous ones. Moreover, the most important thing is that, they were not sung by common people of that time. Folk or popular ballads were poems recited by minstrels and minstrel ballads were mainly popular in the battles. Minstrel ballads were sung in order to encourage people in these battles.

An episode of folk ballads is dramatic. They are spontaneous, informally emotions, dialogues, and actions of common people. The theme of each folk ballad is very simple; it begins, continues and ends in this simplicity. While reading any folk ballad you do not need any explanation. The theme of folk ballads can vary from love to jealousy, from heroism to revenge, from adventure to disaster etc. The period between twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the period of invasions, battles, so the people created national heroes in order to protect their lands and themselves. In this case, they created and sang popular heroic ballads. The most popular heroic ballad was about legendary Robin Hood. The image of this national hero reflected social sympathies of ordinary people of England. Robin Hood was a free farmer, yeoman<sup>1</sup>, who lived in the "Jolly Green Forest", together with his army, consisting of such people as he was and they were outside the law (outlaws) which ruined peasants and artisans. He was a protector and friend of the oppressed; Robin Hood was irreconcilable to the rich feudal. He gave all loot to helpless orphans and widows. He is a superb archer, sarcastic and brave, agile and strong, noble and honest. Robin Hood was against Sheriff of Nottingham and the rich knights and merchants. He was ready to serve his king, but did not agree to live with him in the palace, preferring a free life in Sherwood Forest. Here "by the chirping of birds of forest", he was born; by the name of a bird he was named Robin. Since then the "Jolly Green Forest" was his forever home. Much attention was given to the description of the forest and idyllic life of the "under a tree in a green forest" in ballads. In these paintings, people's dreams of freedom and independence were reflected.

Ballads about the exploits of Robin Hood were cycles, or "complete works": "The Little Geste of Robin Hood" ("Little Song of Robin Hood") and the later cycle "A Geste of

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<sup>1</sup> English guards soldier

Robin Hood” (“Acts of Robin Hood”). These “complete works” were printed over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In these works, the tendency of combining separate ballads in the epic form was observed. For example, “The Little Geste of Robin Hood” can be considered an epic poem, which contains several ballads. However, besides “complete works” there were many independent ballads and songs about Robin Hood.

According to some sources, some ballads take their origin from romances. They are degenerated form of romances. In addition, ballads emerged when well known romances were disappearing. For example, the ballad “Hynd Horn” takes its origin from the old narrative poem of “King Horn”. Sometimes this old poem is called “Horn Childe”. The thought that ballads derived from romances remains obscure. For example, most of ballads have no correspondences with old romances. However, the reason may be many romances did not reach present day. However, if we take this fact, as being the truth, then, why have not old ballads lost too? This fact proves that the history about emerging ballads dates back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as mentioned above. Another fact is that the forms of old ballads were not narrative or prose, they were in verse form or in lyrical. If they were in narrative, they would lost their meaning or originality. In modern literature, some ballads such as “Robin Hood” are paraphrased into stories. In most cases, it is done in order to make them easy for comprehending. Moreover, they are usually formed for children’s literature. Children can read and comprehend this type of ballads easily, of course in modern English. The ballads which degenerated form of old romances are only descendant of these romances. However, the authentic form of ballads is considered the same as the carol. Carol is a joyful and ceremonial song. Carol has narrative form. During this ceremony, people dance in the form of ring dance in different places, for instance, in the garden that is described in “The Romance of Rose”, or in “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, it was described during Christmas games. However, they were carols not ballads. And as it said above, ballads were not considered as the part of literature and were not used by authors of medieval literature for a long time. Nevertheless, perhaps, Geoffrey Chaucer and unknown author of “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” wanted to add some emotions and make their works more interesting and attractive using the carols. It is not clear why unknown author of romance “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” used carols specially. Unlike him, it shouldn’t be considered that Geoffrey Chaucer’s appeal to carols was occasional. We already know that his literary creativity was influenced by French culture. The term carol is derived from French word, “carole” and during medieval period of French literature, it was a fashion to use carols in the works. That was why Chaucer used carols in his works.

According to sources, most ballads were dramatic in character. Actually, the fact that earlier ballads were dramatic does not refer to all ballads. On the other hand, another example, the ballad “Get up and bar the door” is humorous which shows a mode of life, which is still popular problem in our modern period. In this ballad, the bickering about the power between wife and husband is described. After many years, human problem was increasing so fast that it was also described in ballads. Dramatic ballads allow us to enter inner world of the people of that time. Almost, all kinds of problems were described in dramatic ballads. If in the earlier periods, especially in ancient Anglo-Saxon period, the life was something abstract thing, but then people paid more attention to their lives so that they elucidated their social life in ballads too. People began to be afraid of a death. For example, a sailor in the ballad “Sir Patrick Spens” is faced with his death, because it was king’s task to sail the ship in stormy weather:

“O who is this has done this deed,  
This ill deed done to me,  
To send me out this time of the year,  
To sail upon the sea.”<sup>1</sup>

The main hero Sir Patrick Spens of this folk ballad complains of sailing in bad weather, because he realizes that to sail in such weather can end his and his men life, he cannot come back. However, to refuse was in vain, they were afraid of king’s power. Perhaps people wanted to mention the power of the Church by means of the ballad. The church had power to make limitations about people’s daily life. Time after time, people began to show their feelings and emotions by forming ballads, so this literary heritage of literature spread enormously. Ballads also differ from romances, because the themes of most of romances are of love and mystery, only few of them has a tragic plot. The authors of medieval ballad depict their thoughts on the life, and summarizing these thoughts, they can show tragic results of the life. Nevertheless, the authors of medieval romances create their works in order to portrait emotions and sentiments of the figures of life. Both authors form these heritages were so professionally that we can easily comprehend what they wanted to mean.

Unfortunately, the brilliance of ballads was deprived off passing from generations to generation. However, the distinctive feature of ballads is in a singing voice. They are not the same as any epic poems or narrative romances.

At the same time, written literature was developing together with folk literature. Among many English poets and writers of the second half of the fourteenth century, only Geoffrey Chaucer was popular. His contemporaries enjoyed him and went his way during

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<sup>1</sup> Prentice Hall Literature, “The English Tradition”, English and Scottish Ballads, l. 17-20, p. 79, 1989.

their literary creativity. One of them was John Gower. He was Geoffrey's close friend and derived advantages from his literary activity. If Chaucer is rightly considered the creator of the English national literature and the founder of democratic realism, which would play an important role in the future history of English literature, then Gower owned historical merit of summarizing the vast and diverse poetic heritage of the Middle Ages.

The name of John Gower (1330-1408) has long been associated with the name of Chaucer. At the time of flowering of English Renaissance, when poetic fame of Gower was still great, Philip Sidney<sup>1</sup> wrote:

"As the creators of the first poetry in Italian were the poets Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, as in our English they were Gower and Chaucer." As two poetic luminaries, Gower and Chaucer first ascended in the English "sky", and founded the imaginative use of English in the subsequent criticism. Their name were called together in order to oppose each other. The more clearly and brightly disclosed historical significance of Chaucer, the more Gower retreated into the background gradually. The fact, which is focused on attention, is that Chaucer was associated with future Renaissance tradition of English literature with his completely literary creativity, indubitable, Gower stood out at archaic, medieval features of literature. Criticism of the nineteenth century renounced John Gower due to his poetic merits in English literature and placed him in the rank of collateral poets. Comparing Gower with Chaucer, the first one is as "a barren desert" which was bothering for everyone who has already committed a fun outing with Chaucerian pilgrims. In comparison with Chaucer, especially the sphere of his creative peak, Gower was very archaic. They do not correspond to each other even when they write on the same topics and the same subjects. Chaucer differs from him by his wonderful vividness and completeness of impressions. However, it is difficult to understand Gower's literary creativity. He is a rhetorical and didactic poet. Gower remains primarily as a dogmatist poet of medieval style. Gower also differs from his contemporary, Langland. His poem "Vox Clamantis" was written on the subject of peasant uprising in 1381, and deals with many of the same problems, which stood in front of Langland. Here reveals the exact opposite of their points of view with particular clarity. Langland is on the side of the working peasantry, tends to progressive currents of thoughts, and tries to find new ideas. Gower, on the contrary, is as hostile to all new ideas, and a rebellious peasant mass gives him a sense of bitter hatred, revenge and contempt.

Gower yet gravitated too much of what is already stroke to failure in the rising of a new national culture, for example, to a French poetic speech. He always remained as a

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<sup>1</sup> A poet of Elizabethan period (1554-1586)

“trilingual” poet, never felt much attraction to the national poetic speech and all new and fresh ideas, which came from humanist Italy that was modern for him. However, at the same time, Gower was a direct precursor of Chaucer, with the final stage of preparing for the poetry much of what was necessary for the emergence of “*Canterbury Tales*”.

He was close to the court, but not so close as Chaucer, and never held official post. There is no doubt that he came from a wealthy family, was quite a wealthy person, received a good education, and he had no need for cash. He could wholly dedicate himself to literary work, reading, learning languages, etc. Before his death, he lived at the Augustinian monastery, as if he was far way from the world and at the same time close to the capital and palace, not entering the monastic order, but not a stranger to the monastic rules and regulations of life. Gower also was a generous and devout contributor to the monastery's treasury. Here he died, already a blind in his old age. His testament was dated August 15, 1408. In the chapel of the church of the same monastery, was erected a magnificent tomb of Gower. Then the sculptor depicted the figure of the poet in posture of a sleeping old man with praying hands and with a necklace on his chest with a swan logo. On this logo the title of his three major works of poetry: “*Mirour de l'Omme*” (“Mirror of the thinker”), “*Vox clamantis*” (“The Voice of crying out”) and “*Confessio amantis*” (“Lover's confession”) was written. Latin inscription says that ““the famous English poet” John Gower is buried here”.

Only two of these works were popular: Latin poem “*Vox clamantis*” and “*Confessio amantis*” which were written in English. The only manuscript of “*Mirour de l'Omme*” was found in Cambridge only in 1895, and it published later. However, this work was in French. Thus, Gower was a “trilingual” poet who owned equally poetic technique in French, Latin and English.

The earliest of these works is “*Mirour de l'Omme*” which was written nearly 1377-1379, when Gower lived in London. It is a great poem, with 30.000 lines of French verse in ten parts, and completely written in medieval style. The main idea of it is that the vices and virtues always compete for a man who runs towards an evil. It describes conflicts between two groups of society: between Pope, cardinals and craftsmen, laborers. It was written in the first years after the accession of Richard II. The poem reflects the darker sides of those difficult years, when anger and resentment were increasingly seizing in the various social classes of the population of England. It also described aggravated extortion on renewed war with France. However, Gower's criticism was very mild and all time it was accepted as purely ethical evaluations. All are guilty for their depravity equally, for instance, the merchants, workers and monks, kings, to all of them used the same moral criteria. “*Century*” was

responsible for all the sorrows and the negative aspects of modern life. J. Gower also included each person individually, taken without any specification or glimpses of social analysis. “*Mirour de l’Omme*” is not the only work written in French. Several French poems addressed to Henry IV after his accession and it proves that Gower wrote in French until the end of his life. He also tried to write in Latin and English. According to its an external dispassion and passive contemplation of “*Mirour de l’Omme*”, could give the impression that Gower had no addiction and was not able to engage more actively perception of reality about describing social life more colorful. However, his poem “*Vox clamantis*” stands opposite to pervious one. It is a poem of a class hatred and social struggle. It describes peasant uprising in 1381 from its most ardent opponent’s point of view. The poem is written in Latin, and in the first part, the rebellion of Wat Tyler is described in the form of allegory and shows a significant satirical force.

Only ten manuscripts of “*Vox Clamantis*” reached us. However, most important of all works of Gower, was “*Confessio amantis*”. This poem provided him with a long fame. Gower rewrote his work and made significant changes to it. He worked on it so hard and long that, the poem had been read for two centuries. The popularity of the poem was based primarily on its language, it was written in English. There is no doubt, that not only the language was a reason of readers` attraction for a long time. The poem was a real treasure of medieval subjects, an entire encyclopaedia of small narratives, which subsequently used by novelists and playwrights. “*Confessio Amantis* made an important contribution to courtly love literature in English. Gower revised *Confessio Amantis* in 1393, replacing the praise of King Richard II with a dedication to Henry of Lancaster. In return, Henry awarded Gower with an ornamented collar. Unlike other earlier works of Gower, “*Confessio amantis*” had advantages that made it more attractive for readers, at least in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Despite the Gower’s inherent moralism, in this poem, he became a more joyful and entertaining storyteller. The author speaks directly about his “new way” in this work, emphasizing that he creates “a new kind of thing.” In the prologue, Gower tells that once his boat drew level with the royal barge on the Thames, and Richard II graciously invited him on the board of the ship and during their conversation, the king advised him a theme for a new poetic work. Thus, Gower who was a reproached and irretrievable moralist became “the singer of love” unexpectedly. The first edition of the poem, which was nearly in 1390, devoted to Richard II. In the last edition (about 1399) a respectful dedication and the entire episode of the poet's walk together with the king along the Thames were depicted, and it was dedicated to Henry IV to whom, as stressed by the poet, “his heart was in full agreement.”



“Confessio amantis” resembles the French “Roman de la Rose” (“Romance of the Rose”) with its external form. It begins with a vision. It happens in May, in the spring forest. An enamored poet prays Cupid and Venus to pity on him. Venus tells him first to confess his sins to the priest, Genius. The name and image of it is taken from the “Romance of the Rose”, where worthy Nature confesses the priest. The only difference is that Gower’s Genius looks like a real priest as he professes to confess the poet according to all points of rules of art. The ideas suggest that, “Confessio amantis” is close to Chaucer’s “Canterbury Tales”. (Here the “frame story” is meant.) For instance, Genius, like a real confessor, absolves the poet all his sins. He put black beads on his neck and advised him to engage in “moral virtue, and books”. Therefore, he hurries home, “with a heart in convenience”. Such is the “framing” plot of the poem. Chaucer’s “frame story” is successful, vital, and useful for copyright purposes, and differs with individual stories. However, Gower’s framing is artificial and fictitious. In fact, the strange image of “priest” Venus with his classic name, and image of the moralist-enamored poet, holds the second place in the poem.

The fascination of the work, of course, was not in it, but in the united stories, which Gower borrowed from a variety of sources. Gower’s knowledge always differed him from others. E. Wharton<sup>1</sup> called him “one of the most educated men of his time”. Though J. Gower was not as popular as Chaucer was, his works appreciated by readers and his contemporaries for centuries:

“Gower is not a great poet. He is an earnest man with message for his times. He is alarmed at the way the world is going. He exhorts the King, preaches to the public. He is for reform within the established order. He is opposed to Lollardry, and Peasants’ Revolt fills him with horror...”<sup>2</sup>

Besides Gower’s prominent works there was growing the special genre of medieval period, which English literature would contribute to world literature by means of this genre after several centuries. It was drama. English drama began to grow in the depths of medieval culture, religious rites, and was initially a symbolic pantomime illustrating the ceremonies and decorating Easter and Christmas services. English theatre, which flourished only in the sixteenth century, has a long history. Dramatic elements existed in the traditional ritual and everyday poetry of the Anglo-Saxons in the early days of their lives in Britain. In England, as in Western Europe, the independent development of the drama, as a special genre of poetry was after the adoption of Christianity. However, drama and actors of theatres faced with restrictions of the Church:

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<sup>1</sup> The nineteenth century American writer (1862-1937)

<sup>2</sup> “A literary history of England”. . p.266, 1.5-8, Albert C.Baugh, New York 1948

“With the rise of Christianity the theatre ran into other difficulties. The Church objected to its associations with paganism, to the fact that in its lower forms it often ridiculed the new religion, and perhaps most of all to the immortality of both performances and performers.”<sup>1</sup>

The ideas suggest that, the growth of drama was in different places. However, attitude of the nations towards this new genre was also different. For example, Greeks paid much more attention to drama than Romans. That is why we can see the traits of ancient theaters in Greece today. However, ancient drama faded away with the fall of Roman Empire and only remnants of it reached medieval period. The rest of ancient drama was mimics, which later developed into middle ages drama and theatre. Nevertheless, according to other sources, medieval drama does not take its origin from ancient Roman drama; it was just developed form of the Church service.

The earliest evidence about the theatrical performances in England shows in the chronicles of the English monk Matthew Pariss of the monastery of St. Alban. It belongs nearly to 1110 year. The organizer of this performance was Jeffrey Norman, who wrote “The spectacle about St. Catherine” (“Ludus Sanctae Catharinae”) and performed it at monastery school by help of students. Text of it has not reached us, but the story is well known. Utilizing the used stories was one of the later stages of the drama for Western Europe. England has already shown that, they borrowed “The spectacle about the St. Catherine” from France in ready form. In France, these plays with contents, which were taken from the lives of saints, from the miracle legends (“miracula”), have been called “miracle”, whereas the primary religious drama was called “mystery” (from “misterium” – “church service”). In England as the term “mystery” was not known so far, and instead of it, the word “miracle” (miracle play) was used. This term was used instead of both mysteries and miracles in the real meaning of this word. According to some sources, it considered that, mystery plays combined information about religion, the stories from Bible, Jesus, even religious services before and after Christianity:

“The word *mystery*, as applied to medieval drama, refers to the spiritual mystery of Christ’s redemption of humankind, and mystery plays are dramatizations of incidents of the Old Testament<sup>2</sup>, which foretells that redemption, and of the New, which recounts it.”<sup>3</sup>

The emergence of mystery or miracle plays depended on some facts. The main fact was the influence or direct interference of the Church. While dating back to early medieval period, it is doubtless that most of people of that time were ignorant. They did not know and understand

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<sup>1</sup> “A literary history of England”. p.273, l 15-18, Albert C.Baugh, New York 1948

<sup>2</sup> The name of the Bible and other Christian religious books

<sup>3</sup> “Poetry in English; An Anthology” p.308. l. 1-4, M.L.Rosenthal. Oxford University 1987.

any Latin word as the language of the Church was Latin. That was why they did not comprehend the services held in the Church. In order to make the people to understand better and to give information about the Bible, the Church used pictures about each service of the Bible. They did it subsequently at every lesson. Gradually, the Church organized dramatizing these lessons. They performed showing different services from the Bible. For example, first performances were about Christ, his life, death, enlivening etc. The plays of the Church of England were gradually performed in the national English language. The organization of these plays subsequently passed into the hands from clergy to the laity, the representatives of city craft corporations in England, and this process began, in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Moreover, in the middle of the fourteenth century, there have already been great developments about the cycle of religious drama. The rise of medieval drama in England is closely connected with the development of city life, with an increase of fairs, with the development of trade and crafts, with the successes of the guild. These cycles are known as “mystery” cycles as well. For example, “The Fall of Lucifer”, “Noah and the Flood” “Promise of the Christ’s coming”, “Day of Judgment” etc. Each of these cycles deals with the common problem, *“spiritual history and the final judgment of all Mankind”*.<sup>1</sup> The phrase “mystery plays” sometimes misunderstood. From the first sight, the word “mystery” resembles us something mystical. For example, especially children could understand “Mystery plays” as “fairy tales”. Of course, there is no any relationship between “mystery plays” and “fairy tales”. “Mystery” plays are religious plays, and sometimes are called “Miracle” plays.

In parallel with both “mystery” and “miracle” plays, there was developing a special drama genre, “morality” plays on stages of the British theatre in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In England and France “morality”, referred to allegorical performances, which were called “moral spectacles”. In such spectacles, main images were abstractions as prophets, vices, virtues etc. Depending on the codex of Christian morality, it was limiting ideological and story possibilities of dramatic content. However, morality still managed to put such problems, that the following generations were solving them in their philosophical researches with great pleasure. In its dramatic form, morality had important role in the opening way to secular tragedy as “Interlude”<sup>2</sup> to a comedy. The next chapter touches upon interludes. Morality caused discussing about purely human affairs and daily principles of behavior in drama. This genre of literature, allowed such possibilities as dramatizing images, which, the

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<sup>1</sup> “A History of English Literature”. Chapter IV. “The Medieval Drama” p. 3, 1.13-16, 19. Robert Huntington Fletcher 1918.

<sup>2</sup> “a short play (theatre) or, in general, any representation between parts of a larger stage production” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interlude>)

Church itself did not know about them, and though they performed abstract allegorical characters. The development of morality was parallel with the development of an allegorical method of images in the medieval literature. If we pay attention to all above said statements, it could be concluded that the mystery plays were the products of the Church. This product was the intention of the clergy as spreading the services of the Bible and religion through more acceptable and understandable way. Morality plays also have something common with mysteries. To say exactly they took their origin from mystery plays. In this case, the authors of morality plays intended to teach religion through more direct ways which common people could comprehend more easily than mystery plays. Perhaps, it was the reason for using abstract allegorical characters. Moreover, it was main distinctive feature of moralities because, the plays, which have abstract characters, cannot be considered as moralities. The characters should be treated allegorically. Another distinction between them is clearly described as follows:

“The mysteries endeavored to make the Christian religion more real to the unlearned by dramatizing significant events in biblical history and by showing what these events meant in human experience. The moralities on the other hand, employed allegory to dramatize struggle that Christianity envisions as present in every individual...”<sup>1</sup>

In the fifteenth century morality become a favorite genre in England, and even had an impact on the “mystery” or “miracle” in which, for example, in “Mary Magdalene” performed such characters as Sensation, Curiosity, Desire, etc. The first English moralities probably belong to the end of the fourteenth century. “The Castle of Perseverance” was one of the morality plays, which reached to us nearly in 1440, in manuscripts. The attached drawing explained the methods of decoration of the stage. Moreover, it was a significant feature of this manuscript. In the center of the circle, surrounded by a barrier filled with water, is represented allegorical Castle Perseverance, and under it there is a bed designed for a character, depicting Mankind in the character of a child, “as long as he does not stand up and act”, and then is growing to an old man. In five different directions of the circle located “places” for other allegorical characters - in the east for “God” in the west for the “World”, in the north for “Hell”, in the south for the “Flesh”, finally, in the northeast for “Greed”. There are many other episodes, allegorically depicting the history of human life from a cradle to a grave in this morality play. “Death” obliged man to involve new corruption in “Greed” which covered it with gold. After man’s death, there is a dispute about his soul, and finally, his soul saved by Mercy, and the play ends with a solemn hymn, “We praise you to God” (“Te Deum laudamus”).

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<sup>1</sup> “Poetry in English; An Anthology” M.L.Rosenthal. Oxford University 1987 p.363, l. 5-7

There are similarities between “The Castle of Perseverance” and other English moralities of the fifteenth century. For example, “Wisdom” (about 1460), “Mankind” (about 1475) etc. It was suggested that the play “Wisdom” depicted in the walls of a certain monastery. It carried an ascetic idea. According to certain sources, this morality was known as “Mind, Will, and Understanding” as well:

“....Wisdom, also known as Mind, Will, and Understanding....The Devil entices Mind, Will, and Understanding from what appears to be the monastic life, but in the end they are recalled and brought to repentance by Wisdom, who is Christ.”<sup>1</sup> The ideas suggest that “Wisdom” was product of thought by Church of those times. The events happening in the play called people to gather under the protection of the Church once more. Perhaps it was warning by the people who left monasteries. “Mankind” is something different kind of morality. It is rich in satirical and realistic features. There are many funny, sharp and lewd jokes, allusions for specific people and events that are well known by the audience, for whom the play was intended. Thus, comic and satirical elements entrenched in moralities gradually. These elements were bringing them closer with the “mysteries” and so they have the possibility of mutual influence on each other.

Morality play “Everyman” is also known in Latin and Dutch editions. The play was written about the end of the fifteenth century. It does not dramatize the whole of a human life, but only last dying hours. In monologues, the main character highlights his previous entire story. As in all moralities, here a person was also made develop his character and gradually restrain passions. The play was marked by its deep seriousness and almost tragic. It was very popular throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. Everyman lives without any inkling of his death and devotes himself to entirely worldly delight. However, death comes to him in order to call for the judgment of God. Nevertheless, Everyman asks him for delaying, but in vain, he wants to entice the unexpected guest also in vain, and death immediately calls to join him on a journey, which there is no return. Everyman did not immediately understand his hopelessness in his position, and asks Friendship, Relatives, Property to accompany him but they turn away from him. Then he asks for help Good Behaviors, but he lies on the ground so cold, weak, covered with Everyman’s sins so that he cannot even move. Good Behaviors send Everyman to Knowledge who leads him to the priest in order to repent. Then Everyman is accompanied by new figures as Prudence, Strength, Beauty, and the Five Senses, and carries out his last duties, writes his will and is sent to the open grave. However, they leave Everyman one after another, first, Beauty, then Strength, Prudence, and finally Five Senses.

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<sup>1</sup> “A literary history of England”, p.285, l. 31-34, Albert C.Baugh, New York 1948

Only Knowledge stays with him. At the end, celestial powers accept a human soul, cleaning it from abomination. As in “mystery” plays, the main idea in this play was to educate people the services from the Bible, to warn people about the existence of Judgment day. While reading this morality one thought is formed in our minds: we will never take anything from this world, all things that we have, all senses that we have will leave us. It turned out that the medieval morality like “Everyman” is something like a notification. Any of us could be in the place of Everyman. Perhaps, the name of this morality was called as “Everyman” addressing to every man of the world.

Summarizing both chapters, the medieval period could be ended in this morality play, as “Everyman” belongs to the end of the fifteenth century and is considered significant work of last period of the Middle Ages and in addition, of course, drama had been developing towards the end of this period. With the “mystery” or “miracle” and “morality” plays, the medieval period of English literature opened a new beginning for a dramatic tradition for future writers. The representatives of post medieval period were developed by influence of the medieval period. And how did medieval period influence on post medieval period of English literature? The final chapter of this MA dissertation covers the interrelationships between the medieval and post medieval writers and poets of English literature.

### **Chapter III. The interrelationship between medieval and post medieval literature**

In this chapter, it will be defined and investigated interrelationship of medieval and post medieval English literature. Benefiting from the previous chapters, the works of post medieval authors and the influence of medieval period on post medieval English literature will also be expressed in this final chapter.

The end of the Middle Ages of English literature is considered the 80`s of the fifteenth century. According to some literary sources, the end of medieval period is connected with the name of morality drama “Everyman”, which it was written nearly in 1485. Certainly, there were different works written at the end of this period, but “Everyman” is considered one of the significant works, that was created towards the end of Middle Ages. Most sources show the end of medieval period nearly in 1485, the same date of with “Everyman”. That is why the end of this period could be taken together with this morality play.

The successors of medieval writers and poets created their works under the influence of their medieval descendants. Unlike medieval period writers and poets, the followers brought new literary traditions, novelties to the history of English literature. They just revived an ancient Old English literature and gave a new breath to it deriving advantages from medieval period. Social life was changing and developing due to some industrial and political improvements and this influenced on the literature as well. For example, forms, genres, thoughts, ideas, attitudes etc. towards literature were different. The changes substituted medieval period for new periods, which followed one other: Renaissance, Elizabethan period, Restoration, Enlightenment, and Romanticism etc. The names of these periods contain the characteristic features belonging to each period and they differ from one another by various writers, poets, works, genres, literary developments, novelties etc. Previous period influenced preceding one and consequently, all periods of English literature influenced one another. There were interrelationships among all periods. The formation of new period did not happen immediately. New period was emerging within old one. For example, drama works emerged in the Middle Ages, and its forms such as moralities and miracles also appeared which were explained in the second chapter. However, drama reached the peak of its development in Renaissance, especially during Shakespearean period. It could be the main reason why medieval period of English literature is remembered for its great poets as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, for its romances, ballads etc, but not for drama plays. Only during

Shakespearian period, drama gained its popularity thanks to his worldwide works. Medieval works influenced William Shakespeare as well.

New periods brought innovations to every sphere. For example, Renaissance is one of the periods, which is characterized by its significant literature, social life, history etc. In the sixteenth century the development of capitalism was improving rapidly. Landowners preferred wool industry. Peasants became landless by means of separating sheep from their lands. The discovery of America, the growth of industry and cities all over the country were pushing Britain to fight for supremacy on the seas. There were great literary monuments at the beginning of sixteenth and the next centuries such as: a “Utopia”<sup>1</sup> by Thomas More<sup>2</sup>. Thomas More was a typical representative of English humanism. His “Utopia” is a public organization, based in the ideals of humanism. Nevertheless, together with his new ideas in his work “Utopia”, Thomas More had some relationships with medieval literature. Perhaps, it was a source for his significant work. Their interrelationship will be depicted later.

It was a short description of post medieval life after the Middle Ages. All these facts influenced the works that was written by post medieval writers. The impact of the medieval character was felt in the works of post medieval writers. It is said above that previous periods always influenced the following ones. That is why, it is considered, for example, that the period of Enlightenment could not be more influenced than Renaissance by medieval period. That is why the writers and poets of Renaissance were mostly benefited from medieval period of English literature. Thus, the final chapter of this MA dissertation covers Renaissance writers and poets who had interrelationships, and their influence. For example, medieval ballads attracted attention of many writers of post medieval periods and they had a great impact on the development of English literature. For instance, medieval ballads influenced on the works of the Renaissance writers.

The motifs and texts of folk ballads were used by William Shakespeare in his Desdemona’s “Song of the Willow” in “Othello”. He quoted it from ballad tradition of the sixteenth century. But this was more different than old and medieval ballads:

“My mother had a maid call’d Barbary;  
She was in love, and he she lov’d prov’d mad,  
And did forsake her. She had a song of “Willow,”  
And old thing ’twas, but it express’d her fortune,  
And she died singing it. That song tonight  
Will not go from my mind, I have much to do

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<sup>1</sup> The sixteenth century fiction written by T. More

<sup>2</sup> A Renaissance writer (1478-1535)



But to go hang my head all at one side  
And sing it like poor Barbary.”<sup>1</sup>

The popular ballad which most post medieval writers appealed was “The Hunting of Cheviot”. W. Shakespeare’s contemporary Ben Jonson<sup>2</sup> told that he would give everything that he had written in turn of this ballad. This brilliant folk poetry undoubtedly helped to make the changes in the lives of common people, which emerged after 1381, when increased the number of free farmers and the welfare of the people as well. In this atmosphere, how to say, the rays of freedom were spreading over the people, and it was a sign for the composing of folk songs. It cannot be explained why Ben Jonson appreciated the ballad so highly. But perhaps, there were reasons for it. Maybe one of them was depicting the life of common people. As we know, the works portraying people’s life, social life, became popular rather than other works. Of course, it was by means of the people themselves, they made it popular by reading and spreading it. It would be rather logical to point out that, this ballad has an epic character. It resembles the heroic epic poem of “Beowulf”. Unlike “Beowulf” this was a ballad. But the ballad is considered as a heroic epic ballad, because it represents the fight between Scottish count Douglas and British lord Percy of Northumberland in the area wild Cheviot mountains. They fought in the sake of their people and country. Percy wants to hunt in the Cheviot forests which belongs to Douglas from Scotland. Though he was kind, but never wanted Percy to hunt there. That was why the terrible battle began between them. In the result of this battle both two leaders died. After this battle, their kings began to fight in order to have their heroes’ revenge. This ballad had a great impact on the post medieval literature. According to the statement above, W. Shakespeare also used ballads in his works. He was influenced by “The Hunting of Cheviot” too. Perhaps he knew this ballad, because we can infer from the hints in the first part of his “Henry IV” (act V, 4). In his historical work, W. Shakespeare used the character “Douglas”, calling him as “Earl of Douglas”:

“Another king! They grow like Hydra’s heads:  
I am the Douglas, fatal to all those  
That wear those colours on them: what art thou,  
That counterfeit’st the person of a king?”<sup>3</sup>

Folk songs were widespread in Scotland and in England in the Middle Ages as we have already known. The subsequent development of bourgeois civilization, the expropriation of the peasantry, urban and industrial development have led to the fact that in those areas

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<sup>1</sup> “Othello” William Shakespeare, p. 73, l. 23-30, A Digireads. Book, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> A dramatist and poet of the Renaissance period (1572-1637)

<sup>3</sup> “King Henry IV” Part I, p.326, l. 26-29, David Scott Kastan, Croatia 2002

where this process was particularly developed, folk poetry ceased to exist. For the longest time it was preserved in those parts of the country, which stayed away from the capitalist “progress”. Collection and recording of folk poetry were initiated only in the eighteenth century, or when England had already been a bourgeois country. The monuments of folk poetry, which reached us, were written mainly in the North of England and Scotland. In those parts, the influence of the bourgeois civilization was least. The special interest to ballads had risen during pre-Romanticism. In the eighteenth century, Scottish and English folk poetry were systematized and whole models were presented in the form of collections. For example, W. Scott’s “Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border” etc. Other collections of ballads were formed by Thomas Percy, which his name was mentioned in the second chapter, in the medieval ballads. This collection was issued in 1765 under the title “Reliques of Ancient English Poetry” which means “the Monument of Ancient English Poetry”. The collection depicts old and medieval folk songs, ballads that formed by Scottish and English people. Here he includes not only the old folk art, but also imitations. Although he found accurate manuscripts ancient ballads, he altered, added or reduced the old texts. The authors of post medieval period of English literature continued appealing to medieval ballads while creating their own ones. The collection by Percy was of great importance for English poetry of the nineteenth century, especially for its romantic stream. The post medieval poets owe a lot to the collection of Percy. Even W. Scott used his collection and he remembered his first acquaintance with Percy’s ballads as the strongest poetic impression of his childhood. There were different poets from different periods who addressed to medieval ballads using Percy’s collection, for example, W. Shakespeare from Renaissance, S. T. Coleridge from Romanticism, Lord Tennyson from Victorian period, etc. Romantic poets rebounding from the experience Thomas Percy appealed to the tradition of rich folk poetry, especially to the medieval ballads. The most remarkable English literary monument was “Lyrical Ballads”<sup>1</sup> which was created in the 90’s of the eighteenth century. According to his author, W. Wordsworth, the collection was written for all, in that language accessible for everyone. He wrote it together with S. T. Coleridge. Wordsworth wrote only 23 of the ballads, for example, “The Nightingale”, “The Foster-Mother’s Tale” etc. The works included in the collection of “Lyrical Ballads” had to introduce the wide range of readers with the beauty of the nature, taking them to the scope of open and sincere feelings:

“To her fair works did nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;

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<sup>1</sup> A collection of ballads printed in 1798 by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

And much it griev'd me my heart to think  
What man has made of man.”<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, W. Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge were not the only poets appealing to ballads. The collections of folk poetry, especially old and medieval ballads that caused to changes, appeared only throughout the eighteenth century. Therefore, romantics had hundreds of original, fake, old and medieval ballads. However, tasks of Wordsworth were more complicated than his predecessors were. He searched for the source of spiritual richness, which could have a great influence on his contemporaries. In this case, he was a founder of a new genre, literary lyrical ballads in which lyrics had a great importance. In those times, post medieval poets began to use the tradition of medieval ballads. Even, some of them did not change the theme of the ballads. They just imitated medieval ballads. The theme such as hero, love etc. remained unchanged. Nevertheless, Wordsworth brought a new theme where emotional and ethical feelings were expressed. However, it had less meaning for his contemporaries comparing with folk ballads.

Appealing to folk poetry, especially medieval ballads enriched poetry with new images and set new problems for English writers and poets. Here the classic traditional themes stayed behind, but appeared new images such as a Human. However, this novelty did not satisfy some new authors. They hoped that the traditions were carefully preserved in the folk literature that passed from generation to generation. According to these traditions, they could identify national shapes of the literature and its characters. Of course, there were characters in English literature, which were taken from folk literature. However, it was not easy to create the language, thoughts, the way of life and acts of the characters. The authors had to think carefully in order to attract the great amount of readers. Medieval literature and its characters impressed the readers. However, this time post medieval writers and poets should surprise their readers with the new features of their characters and ideas, though they based their writings on medieval works. It turned out that, post medieval poets or writers used the characters taken from medieval literature. For example, the hero of medieval ballads Robin Hood was the main character for post medieval authors for a long time. In the second half of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we observe widespread popularity of Robin Hood as a ballad hero. By this time, the ballad cycles of Robin Hood already formed completely. Other evidences suggest that in the late of fifteenth century Robin Hood has become one of the essential figures of spring ceremonies, hero of the English celebrations with dancing and singing, during which was widespread dramatization of separate episodes of

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<sup>1</sup> “Lines written in early spring”, p. 54, l.5-8, “Lyrical Ballads 1798 by Wordsworth and Coleridge” The Echo Library 2007.

his complete adventure life. For example, there is a document relating to 1516 which testifying to it. It tells how in the May Day games, King Henry VIII during his walk met the crowd of two hundred yeomen. They dressed in green clothes, and they were lead by a man named Robin Hood, they hit the mark and invited the king to enjoy their art.

In half of the sixteenth century in some parts of England, the ceremonies of Robin Hood led to the special public holidays, which were dedicated to him. So, Bishop Latimer (1587-1555) tells furiously that one day, he was about to preach in a small town near London, but on arriving there he found the church locked, it appeared that all townspeople celebrated the “day of Robin Hood”. Robin Hood was considered a historical figure for centuries. Therefore, early ballads researcher Joseph Ritson<sup>1</sup> pointed to the historical prototype ballad of Robin Hood in the person of “Robert Fitzood” who lived in the reign of Henry II. The life of this “Robin Hood” as Ritson tells is based primarily on the ballads, and not on historical evidences, and describes him as a noble popular hero. According to Ritson, historical Robin Hood was banished; he had too much debt, which he was not able to pay. He ran into the forest and lived happy and independently. W. Scott adopted such a point of view of Robin Hood. He introduced his novel “Ivanhoe”<sup>2</sup> including a number of episodes of his legendary ballad stories. Eloquent advocate of this theory was a French historian Augustine Thierry (author of “The History of the Conquest of England by Normans”, 1830, and a special works of Robin Hood, 1832). According to him, Robin hates and persecutes the rich barons not for greed or envy, but because they are robbers of Anglo-Saxon king, also foreigners.

The tradition of using Robin Hood as the main hero by post medieval writers and poets were continued for centuries. Each author approached this problem from different side of their points of view. Some of them accepted Robin Hood as the main hero of the medieval literature and whole England. Therefore, for others his existence remained unknown. For example, later researches tried to find this national hero during the period of Henry II or Edward I about in the thirteenth century. Finally, they tried to bring evidence, as if the ballad hero is identical with a certain “Robert Hood” referred to the documents of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, even he was a lackey of Edward II, who had the same name. None of these efforts gave any results. Robin Hood’s historical existence cannot be proven and even now, it is under question.

The influence of medieval ballads was still felt in the works of post medieval writers and they addressed to folk poetry repeatedly. Among these authors, there was a poet who was closely connected with ballads; it was because of his Scottish origin. He was Walter Scott an

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<sup>1</sup> An antiquarian (1752-1803), who is the author a collection of ancient Robin Hood ballads.

<sup>2</sup> A historical novel was written in 1820 by Walter Scott

English poet and novelist, originally from Scotland. He influenced by old and medieval ballads while creating his literary works. Scottish folk ballads not only inspired him, but also enriched his poems in expressive and poetic intonations. As being spirit, complicated human life in its historical concreteness, folk ballad interested W. Scott, feeding his mind and soul, and brought him an ethical pleasure. The influence of folk ballads on W. Scott's literary activity was enormous and amazing. Historical paintings, life and traditions of the period, the world of the deep human experience, all these were reflected in the ballads with which he was acquainted first time and which he owed only the collection of T. Percy. It impressed him in his childhood so deeply that he would strengthen to search, use historical events, and depict them in his works all his life. Ballad poetry not only revived tumultuous pages of the history but also the traditions of people and their aspirations proved the attitudes of the people of that time to the world surrounding them, to various events, provided abundant sources for authors' thoughts. Ballad, even in the absence of its historical events strikes its history because it reflects character of public relations. Unlike medieval ballads, ballads of other periods cover natural and real events of human life. However, in most medieval ballads the theme was especially about heroism and love. In this case, we cannot speak about something real, because people created some heroic ballads in order to entertain. The ballads belonging to different periods have common things like historical events as mentioned above. The ballads of all periods of English literature dealt with the life of real people and events, of course with some exceptions. The phrase "historical events" belongs to ballads of all period from this point of view. It would be rather logical to point one important thing about ballads, which it was mentioned in the previous chapter. For along time, ballads were not considered as the serious genre and branch of English literature. Perhaps, the reason was that ballads were composed orally and they passed mouth to mouth until a certain century and until it was written down. However, medieval ballads had so great influence that post medieval poets and writers could not pass away from them. Their attitudes towards ballads were also different. Some of them only read medieval and old ballads in order to get information, others used them in their works so that the reader could not feel it, and there were such post medieval authors, that they just dedicated most of their literary activity only to ballads. The works based on medieval ballads but now differed from previous ballads in forms, ideas and of course characters. For example, for W. Scott, a ballad was a living history of the people, which perceived as something real and actual and he advised to read these inventions together with the works of professional historians, in order to get an idea about the ancient history of their country. Here, he perhaps refers to Thomas Percy's collection.

Influenced by medieval ballads, W. Scott wrote ballads dealing with Scotland. Of course, being a Scottish he could never pass away from resembling his country. He published a three-volume collection of ancient ballads under the name "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" in 1802-1803. He regarded these ballads as historical documents and together with it, he set himself such responsibilities, such as to select and research them so that they were clear and suitable for readers. In addition, readers could bare to their mind the idea that "how their ancestors thought", "which intentions made them to act like this and not contrary", and "in which language they spoke". According to Scott, it should help to understand historical facts. Ballads showed that how people were living in the old periods. These people were often portrayed on the background of the historical events of the ballads. May be they were depicted poorly or inaccurate and besides it, they were closely connected with traditions of their country with its characteristic landscape. Unlike medieval ballads, sometimes, these characters of the ballads preserve historical names, but there were also met common people very often. The actual reality of the ballads was suspicious. In the monuments of the first ballad makers, the events were depicted inaccurate and wrong. Many details were disappeared during later recitation. However, for W. Scott the important thing was singer's attitude to the event. He used them referring as historical source, it was because of ballads had connections with the histories, exactly to say ancient history of English literature.

The old and medieval ballads entering post medieval English literature with an enormous system, attracted numerous imitations and special lyric-epic genre and had their characteristic features and rules. W. Scott himself appreciated it in his "Essay on imitation of the ancient ballad" (1830) and tried to write its history and characterize it. He also spoke of the lyrical virtues of ballad, which answered his interests. He was interested not only in historical ballads, but also in "romantic" ballads, which dealt with "fictitious and wonderful adventures". Among imitators as W. Scott wrote, we could distinguish two directions. The first one reproduces a language, the tradition and feeling of the ancient poems; others go their way and create ballads, which can be accepted exactly neither ancient nor new.

From the previous chapter it was clear that, the authors of most ancient and medieval ballads did not reach us. If the creators of old ballads were common people, and they were spreading by passing mouth to mouth, from a generation-to-generation, then it would be clear that most of them could be lost. Then, most of the old ballads were not written down. However, early medieval ballads also faced this problem, but most of them were written down and had authors. But how could the authors of these ballads be lost? W. Scott gave an explanation to this problem as well. According to him, there could be several reasons for

disappearing of ballad singers. They could be stupid virtues of singers, laws of those times, pursuing them for lack of discipline, and spreading of printing. Spreading of printing allowed correcting and improving texts. The development of the culture of Renaissance, and acquaintance with Greek and Latin literature had their influence on the literary creativity and tastes as well. Folk poetry also joined literature and culture and began to improve its language and poetic speech.

Most ballads of Middle English literature were created spontaneously. That was why their form and language were rough. These ballads were elementally, as their creators did not think or write down them while composing. They just extemporized ballads and these ballads passed orally for centuries. W. Scott explained this problem from his point of view. He always spoke about “roughness” of the language and even the content of ballads. However, sometimes he saw a special charm in them and “rough” ballads seemed to him more attractive than polished and artificial works of civilization. The beauty of ballads was disappeared by means of the development civilization and mastership: recitation continuing for several centuries, modernizing, and all these facts changed rough and beautiful poetry. Changes in the style of the folk poetry, ended in lost of naturalness of ballads. He considered that to change and to apply new technique was the one of the features of the new periods. W. Scott believed that to “improve” old and medieval ballads should be only in the same style and form as they were. Ballads should not be decorated with stylistic devices such as metaphor, similes, and epithets in order to give them rhythmical effects. In this case, it makes worse the meaning of ballads and prevents readers from feeling the true sense of them. For example, when translating the old and some medieval ballads into modern English, the translator should preserve the originality of the text; he or she should not intervene in it with his own words or opinions. Such kind of works should only be explained in target languages. In this case, the originality of the texts will be preserved and while reading it we cannot meet with misunderstanding.

Though W. Scott`s interest in Scotland and ancient forms of speech and thoughts, he understood his duty as literary rather than scientific. He corrected poorly preserved ballads, completed unfinished words, verse and whole stanza, shortly to say, he reached his goal. He created brilliant literary values from dark, out dated, partly lost ballads. All confuse and artificial ballads became to be recognized as masterpieces of ancient style ballads by means of his pen. W. Scott removed all covers from ballads, which showed them artificial. He preserved the originality of old and medieval ballads. It was indispensable for English literature.

After Caxton's invention of a new type of printing, English literature developed rapidly. Ancient manuscripts were now printed and spread. That was why writers and poets of medieval period began to search and create new genres, because previous genres were spread by means of printing and readers were aware of these literary works and read repeatedly. However, the new type of printing has not stopped forming of new ballads, but only new features added to it. At the beginning of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ballads were spreading among people in the form of volatile sheets, printed in Gothic type (black letters), with engravings on the woods. However, they were preserved with oral song tradition. Therefore, later researchers distinguished folk ballads, which were composed orally, street-ballads, which were sung according to the text and created by separate professional singers, and finally ballads, which were composed in imitation of folk ballads and for special literary purposes. Of course, such classification is conventional, because the first two of classified ballads is not always easy to distinguish.

Ballads were influenced by other genres of English literature. Generally, the genres have relationships with one another in literature. It is already obvious from the second chapter that, actually ballads took their origin from old romances. According to the second chapter, "ballads were degenerate forms of ancient romances". Generally, their relationship was described in the previous chapter in detail. However, the intention is not to resemble this problem once more, but is to touch such facts that how medieval romances influenced post medieval English literature. Were there any relationships between medieval romances and post medieval works?

"Arthurian revival" develops within the frame of "the medieval revival" as the cultural event of England and is closely connected with the interest about the legends of King Arthur and Knights of the Round Table. Arthurian tradition is rich, diverse and has a history of research in English literature. This interest arose nearly at the end of the eighteenth century. This century belongs to period of Romanticism. The authors of this period began to use this literary genre again, but now several centuries after. We know that, medieval romances dealt with various subjects. Medieval romances classified as classical romances, romances of native English heroes, and Arthurian romances. The romantics were searching natural and original things in order to describe in their works and most of them benefited from medieval romances. "The essential elements of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty. And it is as the accidental effect of these qualities only, that it seeks the Middle Ages, because in the overcharged atmosphere of the Middle Ages there are unworked sources of romantic



effect, of a strange beauty to be won by strong imagination out of things unlikely or remote....”<sup>1</sup>

Really, according to the second chapter, we observed that medieval romances had romantic peculiarities. However, they were incomplete thoughts. Medieval love described the love between the knight and the ladies, courtly love etc. The most poets and writers inspired from depicting this form of love. However, while applying to the medieval books one can feel the absence of natural love. For example, expressing love to nature, generally, the beauty of nature, trees, birds, rivers etc. It is the reason why, the motto of romantics was “return to nature”. The medieval writers simply forgot to complete this theme. In those times, almost most medieval authors were influenced by one another, besides it, by ancient legends of national heroes such as Robin Hood, King Arthur. The works about such heroes also had an impact on romantics. Appealing the themes of medieval period of English literature by post medieval writers and poets, especially by romantics was not in vain. Perhaps the first reason was like this: it was easier for them to continue already worked, but incomplete ideas than creating new ones. The second reason could be the popularity of medieval works. For example, the major work of Middle Ages English literature “The Canterbury Tales” was a basic source for post medieval authors in order to create new works. For example, John Bunyan’s<sup>2</sup> “The Pilgrim’s Progress” took its origin from “The Canterbury Tales” etc. The third reason could be interest to medieval works. Most of post medieval writers used medieval works for not only contributing new genres and ideas to English literature. They did it in order to satisfy the interest of their readers. A reader could certainly, choose the best and interesting works and appreciate them. The theme of medieval works interested readers much more than the new writers’ works. The reason was in that, the subjects of medieval works dealt with realistic views, especially the history of England and its literature. That was why they preferred to read medieval works. Therefore, post medieval writers including romantics, appealed to the works of Middle Ages English literature as main sources in order to found their own works on.

During the eighteenth century, there have been many important features of the romantic views as an ironic self-esteem, anti-rationalism, and the idea of “original”, “extraordinary” desire for the old days in England. Most of writers and poets of these periods began to appeal English literature of medieval period. However, most interesting genre for them was a medieval romance, or shortly to say a chivalric romance. Chivalric romance attracted them when Malory’s romance “La Morte de Arthur” was printed second time in

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<sup>1</sup> “ A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century”, p.12, l.1-4, Henry Augustine, 2008

<sup>2</sup> The seventeenth century writer (1628-1688)

1816. (The first print was in 1485 by Caxton). Since then medieval romances, particularly Arthurian romances became the centre of literary source and interest for a long time. For example, William Wordsworth based his “The Egyptian Maid” on medieval legends. He wrote it in 1835 and used the phrase “Round Table”, a feature belonging to medieval Arthurian romances:

And to Caerleon's loftiest tower  
Soon will the Knights of Arthur's Table  
A cry of lamentation send;  
And all will weep who there attend,  
To grace that Stranger's bridal hour,  
For whom the sea was made unnavigable<sup>1</sup>

Not only the writers of Romanticism used medieval romances in their works as the source, but also there were such authors that they lived before romantic period and had interrelationship between medieval romances and their works. Generally, using this rich literary genre of English literature brought colorfulness to the works of authors.

One of the poets who also applied medieval romances in his works was Edmund Spenser (1552-1599). He was one of the major poets of the Renaissance period. In his works, it is not difficult to see the influence of the medieval romances, especially Arthurian and chivalric legends. E. Spenser as all great poets felt the form and the influence of the period on his literary creativity. He was such poet that he had a great contribution to English literature. There are such poets and writers who had done indispensable work for the development of English literature. For example, Geoffrey Chaucer founded English language and realism, then by means of Walter Scott English ballads preserved their originality etc. Edmund Spenser was one of those who could be included to this list, because he tried to do his best about improvement of English poetry. He addressed in his work to ancient and medieval works and authors. As it was mentioned in the second chapter, medieval romances were rich in historical elements. For example, there was a comprehensive description of castle life in the medieval romances. Then, the love between knights and women, then battles between knights and enemies, courtly love, finally King Arthur and his knights, all these were the historical facts of medieval period. Perhaps, the intention of Edmund Spenser was to improve poetry while searching past, and history of English literature. He wanted to make a grandiose English language going back to ancient traditions. He was acquainted with popular tales and myths, which took its origin from Middle Ages, for example, old and medieval folk poetry, legends

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<sup>1</sup> “The Egyptian Maid” by William Wordsworth, p.282, l.27-32, Edward Moxon, London 1925

about Arthur and his knights, medieval romances, allegories of giants and wizards etc. He created such poetic works in which local traditions had interwoven with classic traditions. E. Spenser had a very important and generous goal. It was to improve England, which he loves, but unlike other innovator poets, the courtyard and the Queen stood at the first place for him. Perhaps, by means of this fact, he could not achieve his aim completely, because there was some interference by the authority. (For example, one could not express feelings and emotions as wished. The poet could only glorify the nature, the crown etc.) In Spenser joined the features of Medieval and Renaissance period, modern (his time) and classical, courtyard and people. Not depending on his purpose, he remained as the impeccable poet who searched medieval period. However, of course, he could not be appreciated as a great poet as Geoffrey Chaucer. In contrast to the works of Chaucer, he could not be valued from the point of human experience. For example, when the commercial world was ready to touch with its ugly and polluted hands, works by Spenser were carefully preserved and was not stained. His works were for reading only in order to admire glorifying beauties around us. However, he left a significant legacy in lyrical poetry. He worked on the traditional genres of both medieval and Renaissance genres, as it was stated above. He developed English pastoral<sup>1</sup> in his “The Shepheardes Calender”. It is about the character’s life, which is told by twelve eclogues,<sup>2</sup> which means twelve months of the year. The name of the work “Calendar” means these twelve months. The work contains of the description each season. All features belonging to each season are described in this poem with accuracy. The main character of this poem is Colin Clout who is a shepherd. All details of his life are described by the twelve month separately. Spenser’s “The Shepheardes Calender” resembles one of the significant works of the medieval period. It is doubtless that author was benefited from Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Canterbury Tales”. Like in “Canterbury Tales”, Spenser wrote different poems told by twelve months. From the previous chapter we have already known that in “The Canterbury Tales”, there are various stories told by pilgrims. In Spenser’s work, the stories are told by months. Unlike, G. Chaucer’s “Tales”, it had no character of frame story and all stories are about the main character Clout.

However, his work “The Faerie Queene” (“the Fairy Queen”) brought more fame than his other works. The idea of the poem is extremely complex: Spenser chose for it the form of chivalric romance, its characters - the legendary King Arthur and his knights who experienced

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<sup>1</sup> Lifestyle is that of shepherds herding livestock around open areas of land according to seasons and the changing availability of water and pasturage. It lends its name to a genre of literature. A pastoral is a work of this genre. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastoral>)

<sup>2</sup> A poem in a classical style on a pastoral subject. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eclogue>)

a series of dizzying adventure in which high moral and religious feelings were moving together with them.

All heroes embody certain virtues such as justice, chastity, loyalty, piety, and each of the 12 parts of the poem was dedicated to analysis of one of them. The virtues are also such characters coming from medieval period. Passion for honor, effort for moral perfection, and in the spirit of humanistic ideals completed Arthurian story with Renaissance content. Besides it, addressing to the Arthurian legends determined exactly common interest in the national history, because these legends and medieval romances contained historical events, as it was stated above.

The interrelationship between medieval and post medieval period was continued by this romance. The authors of other periods also applied to this cycle. Lord Tennyson, one of the poets of the Victorian period, accurately reworked the life of King Arthur. Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote his work referring to the material of the medieval legends of King Arthur, especially benefited from Thomas Malory's "La Morte de Arthur". At the same time, the interpretation of the Arthurian legends by poet, created within the frame of "Arthurian revival" when romantics of the nineteenth century and Victorian poets and writers offered their own interpretation of the medieval stories about King Arthur and Knights of the Round Table. For example, E. Spenser, W. Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge, J. Keats and others were not intended to create monumental Arthurian works, but they widely cited motifs, allusions, heroes, legends (such as, Arthur, Merlin, etc.) and saw them as source of the vivid, strong characters and high spirit.

The medieval Arthurian tradition reached its peak of popularity by means of his work "Idylls of the King". It is one of the longer poems by him and consists of twelve poems, which deal with Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The work is about Arthur's efforts and failures about creating a marvelous kingdom. Moreover, here he was described from his reign as the king to his death. The different knights are also described here such as, Lancelot, Lady of the Lake etc.

The king in his work differs from the king of the medieval romances. According to researchers, his Arthur is not a medieval king in fact, because he does not have historical features. Thus, Arthur in the "Idylls of the King" is described with the idealist conception of the history, common in the middle of the nineteenth century. The hero is presented as an ideal king, whose efforts formed a prosperous state. The elements of the medieval chivalric romance could be highlighted in this work. Unlike the hero of the medieval, chivalric romances who was focused on the adventures, and actions of the characters, Tennyson shifts

the emphasis to the psychological sphere. Almost all main characters of the work depicted in the moments of the mental disorder, fluctuations, uncertainties and in the situation of the moral choice. His poem is one of the significant works about revival Arthurian romances. Both Thomas Malory and Lord Tennyson told the same story. However, there was a distinct difference between their works. The first difference is that Malory's work was medieval, but the work by Tennyson was modern (here his period is meant). The second difference, the heroes and setting which created by Malory, are considered real and he wrote it in prose. However, Tennyson used blank verse<sup>1</sup> and made changes to medieval hero of chivalric romance, describing him as the nineteenth century nobleman dressed in armor. Tennyson made some changes not only in the form of the romance, but also in the story. For example, Guinevere was to be burnt in his work, but she was rescued by Lancelot in Malory's work. Unlike Malory's work, in the work of Tennyson she escapes to convent then Arthur forgave her. However, she stayed in the convent until her death.

"The Idylls of the King" promoted subsequent writers and poems to use and create works in this series. It was spread all over the country and was read very often than other works. It has an allegorical character, which involved many readers. The work simply depicted the conflicts of social life in England during Victorian era. "The Idylls of the King" has similarity with "The Canterbury Tales". Thus, both works deal with the shortcomings of the society, one express medieval society, another Victorian. Appealing to Arthurian legends was still felt in the works of the post medieval poets and writers. However, there is not any work as "The Idylls of the King" which considered the best work about the King Arthur and his Knights after medieval period.

As it was stated above, perhaps Tennyson used "The Canterbury Tales" as the source for his work. However, post medieval writers or poets who used "Tales" were out of question. John Bunyan was one of the religious writers of the seventeenth century who benefited by G. Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales". Of course, there were differences. Unlike Chaucer, J. Bunyan was a clergyman, and like other clergymen, he preferred to dedicate his works to religion, church, and the Bible. In his work "Pilgrim's progress", Bunyan expressed his emotions about individualism. However, his individualism was religious. In Chaucer's work, there were many pilgrims, but in the work by Bunyan, there was a man. The name of his pilgrim was Christian. His inseparable feature of religion was so that it was expressed in his hero's name. Christian was seeking of salvation during his pilgrimage. The main idea of Christian's pilgrimage is expressed by his inner expedition. According to Bunyan, one could

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<sup>1</sup> An iambic pentameter ("The sounds of Blank Verse", "Blank Verse: Guide to its History and Use", p.1, l.1, Robert Burns Show USA 2007)

achieve the solution of the salvation by his or her strength. Nevertheless, as to Geoffrey Chaucer, one could not achieve this solution lonely; there should be many people. He expressed the thought of achieving salvation by means of his 24 pilgrims. They gathered and were on their way telling various stories during their pilgrimage, as it is already obvious from the second chapter. In his work, there were different people, both men and women from various social classes. It shows that all people are equal and all had to tell a sole tale in Chaucer's "Tales". Unlike Bunyan, Chaucer did not agree that the problem of salvation should be solved by means of inner world of pilgrimage or journey of the main character. There should also be involved people from different classes. Besides it, Bunyan proposes his readers "to take part in" or to be a narrator in his work. Unlike Bunyan, Chaucer was against to see his readers as a narrator. Instead, Chaucer creates such characters that they are "incomplete" with their shortcomings. In this case, he suggests his work for "imperfect" readers in order to "complete" it equally.

John Bunyan was a clergyman. Thus, he reflected religious separation, which took place in his time. He was for religious thoughts in his work, but G. Chaucer also depicted the impact of the Church in the Middle Ages and his work was something like the response to this impact. But unlike John Bunyan, the Church in "Tales" reflects not saving one's life, because all human beings, Christians should struggle for salvation, for all's life. Another feature that differs from Chaucer's "Tale" is about Christian's responsibility or burden. It is such burden that Christian was made to bare. Burden is also described in "Tales". However, Chaucer described it in different ways. From the previous chapter we have already known that all characters in "Tales" have their own features with eternal and external peculiarities. For example, each pilgrim in his work wore his or her burden or sin. The appearance of merchant in his work implies his wish to be rich as a "real merchant". But in fact, he is not rich, he simply shows himself as a wealthy merchant. In this case, unlike the sin of Bunyan's character, the appearance reveals individual's sin in "The Canterbury Tales". Another interesting fact is that the source for J. Bunyan's work is clear. It should be considered "The Canterbury Tales". But Geoffrey Chaucer created such story himself, mainly benefited by Boccaccio whom was stated in the second chapter. Thus, that is worth investigating his work more than Bunyan's work. In contrast to J. Bunyan, Chaucer criticized the Church very often in his work. He managed doing and was not afraid of depicting it in his work:

"Chaucer often questions and criticizes the church and other powerful social and political institutions. Because such criticism was a dangerous business in Medieval England,

Chaucer nearly hides his cutting commentary beneath allusions, if one was unfamiliar with Chaucer's allusions, then one could never possibly truly understand Chaucer's meaning."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, it was mighty of Chaucer creating such statements. Only those understood his phrase who knew his handwriting or code. Chaucer had influences not only on English literature, but also on the forming and improving of Standard English language. Modern English language is closely connected, simply similar to it. The only difference could be in the places of the vowels. Only after his death, the place of vowels changed. It was the impact of the Great Vowel Shift. Sometimes it is still difficult to read his works. However, the person who knows archaic English words could easily read any work by Chaucer. For example, while making searches it was found two variants of "The Summoner's Tale", both in original and modern translation:

"This frere bosteth that he knowth helle,  
And God it woot, that it is litel wonder;  
Freres and feendes been but lyte asonder.."  
For, pardee, ye han ofte tyme hers telle  
How that a frere ravished was helle  
In spirit ones by a vision; (Original text)

"This friar boasts that he knows hell,  
And God knows that it is little wonder;  
Friars and seldom are seldom far apart"  
For, by God, you have oftentimes heard tell  
How a friar was taken to hell  
In spirit, once by a vision; (modern translation)<sup>2</sup>

Chaucer was a great poet of the medieval period of English literature by who almost most post medieval writers and poets were influenced. One of them was John Skelton, talented and skilful author of the Renaissance period. The impact of Chaucer's tradition was felt in his works as well. But unlike other authors who were influenced by Chaucer, Skelton wrote his opinions about Geoffrey Chaucer and his contemporary John Gower. In his work "Philip Sparrow", he simply praised the perfectness of the language, which Chaucer used. In this work, he described the imperfect use of English language. However, by means of Chaucer's language people now could improve theirs too. From the lines of the poem, it is

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<sup>1</sup> [literature-study-online.com/essays/bunyan-chaucer.html](http://literature-study-online.com/essays/bunyan-chaucer.html)

<sup>2</sup> "The Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer", p.134, Simon and Schuster 1948

proved once again that how Chaucer influenced on both literature and language at those times:

“In Chaucer I am sped,  
His Tales I have read  
His matter is delectable,  
Solacious, and commendable;  
His English well allowed,  
So as it is empowed,  
For as it is employed,  
There is no English avoid.”<sup>1</sup>

However, according to Skelton’s opinion, unlike Chaucer, Gower’s character was not imagined as perfect as Chaucer was. It turned out that a medieval English poet John Gower was not as popular as Geoffrey Chaucer was, according to the second chapter. Almost, the opinions of most post medieval writers were the same. For example, Skelton expressed his feelings about Gower as following:

“Gower’s English is old,  
And of no value told;  
His matter is worth gold,  
And worthy to be enrolled.”<sup>2</sup>

Here he alluded to Gower’s using three languages in his works, especially Latin, old English. That was why Skelton described his language as old. His contemporary Thomas Wyatt admired Chaucer’s works and his language as well. He used the word “newfangledness” from Chaucer’s quotes and used it in his work:

“And I have leave to go of her goodness,  
And she also to use newfangledness.  
But since that I so kindly am served,  
I would fain know what she hath deserved.”<sup>3</sup>

Sir Thomas Wyatt was not only person who was benefited by Chaucer’s literary creativity in order to make his works more readable. The Romantic poet, William Blake also used Chaucer’s popularity. He exhibited with his own works a market where the works of Chaucer were. There was the illustration of Canterbury. He appreciated Geoffrey Chaucer much and considered him along with Milton and Shakespeare as one of the pillars of English

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<sup>1</sup> From “Philip Sparrow”. John Skelton. Part I, p. 19, l. 788-803.

<sup>2</sup> From “Philip Sparrow”. John Skelton. Part I, p. 18, l. 784-787

<sup>3</sup> “Wyatt: “They flee from me” in the Master poems of English Language”. Richard Howard. 1947. p.3-5, l.18-21



literature. Indeed, “The Canterbury Tales” written at the end of fourteenth century is masterpiece of the medieval literature. All characters in it are united by common occupation; they were on the pilgrimage to St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury. Blake saw an allegoric character in this earthly pilgrimage. In addition, he believed that pilgrims were characters of embodying the shapes of secular and eternity.

Besides Chaucer’s influence, there was relationship between his contemporary Langland and post medieval writers. Of course, these interrelations showed itself in his influence on their literary creativity. The emergence of humanist circles at universities was due to the influence of Italian humanism when new trends appeared in English literature. The greatest figure of humanism in English literature was Thomas More who depicted one of the themes of Renaissance, “Utopia” where perfect society based on equality and justice and ruled by the principle of collective ownership and community work. It reveals that Thomas More had basic source to write his masterpiece, and it could be William Langland’s “The vision of Peter Plowman”. It was fourteenth century when Langland created the thought about “imaginary world”. In addition, almost about two centuries after, this theme was rewritten. However, of course, it was rewritten in the different aspects. Thomas More saw every person equal, without any rich and poor in his “Utopia”, but there were rich and poor in Langland’s imaginary world. Besides it, Langland wrote about shortcomings of his society, such as social and ethical issues, in the same way, he showed hopes, wisdoms of English peasantry. Thomas More’s attitude toward society was different. He simply approached this theme optimistically. Of course, as in Langland’s work there also were people who worked hard, but unlike Langland’s work, in the “Utopia” they had a time for rest. Generally, Langland depicted the allegory of the life of his society. He intended to show bad sides of his society thorough painting imagined world according to the aspiration of the fourteenth century English society, especially peasants. However, Thomas More as a true humanist insisted on the development of the personality in his society, and each person should have individual intellectual pursuits.

Thomas More brought humanist ideas to English literature with his “Utopia”. This was literary trend, which later was seen in post-medieval drama. In the first half of the sixteenth century the tradition of morality plays was continued. Now morality plays differed from previous, medieval ones. According to the second chapter, medieval drama had important features. First, it was popular with its moralities and mysteries. But gradually mystery plays were going to fade away during Elizabethan period in the end of the sixteenth century. However, the fate of morality was different. Religious struggle could not be fatal as it was for mysteries. Moralities had a very specific method in order to promote new humanistic ideas,

and for this reason, humanists used them in order to discuss various ethical, religious, political problems. In this case, most moralities began to improve within new secular drama including historical drama. For example, Bishop John Bale (1495-1563) wrote plays about Biblical stories. However, his work “Kynge Johan” about king of England, which was written nearly 1538, mainly consists of historical chronicles. It is the first historical chronicles in English drama. The interesting thing in this play is that, there are number of various allegorical characters, which was a specific feature of medieval moralities. He included here allegorical characters as Mutiny, Authority and Aggressor. However, these allegorical characters differed from medieval ones. Now, they were concrete. Each allegoric character referred to a concrete person. For example, allegorical characters became historical ones in this play: Mutiny was Stephen Langton, the papal bishop candidate for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Authority became Cardinal Pandolfo, and Aggressor was the papacy itself. Thus, it began to spread such tradition as giving characters the “speaking” names, which defined their characters. Post medieval authors continued this new tradition for a long time, even today in modern literature it is observed. Composition of allegorical characters dramatically updated. Along with Devoutness, Wealth, Poverty, Generosity, Greed, Death, and other characters of medieval symbolism, there appeared those who reported interests to science, literature, education, humanistic ideas. The brightest types of morality, comics were formed. Therefore, cheerful characters easily jumped from mystery to morality, and now, in combination with an old clown, chaffed public with rattles, became figure of vice, performed under different names.

Based on the medieval moralities, nearly towards the end of the sixteenth century, there appeared new type of plays in England. They were interludes. In the second chapter, it was mentioned that moralities opened the new way for Interludes, comedy plays. They were plays with comic content not only inserted between the separate parts of religious drama, but also they were independent comic plays involving several actors. That was why the border between moralities and interludes were often erased. Gradually, interludes began to develop independently, not within moralities. During these developments, there appeared such writers that gave a great contribution to the development of English literature. For example, William Shakespeare was one of the post medieval authors, which his name stood in the second place after Geoffrey Chaucer. His name is closely connected with English drama. However, drama appeared in the late of the medieval period and medieval drama was developed by means of moralities, mysteries. Shakespeare improved it and it reached its peak of popularity during Renaissance. Perhaps, it is reason for remembering Geoffrey Chaucer when we speak about medieval period of English literature and Shakespeare when we speak about Renaissance.

Shakespeare had the international significance in realism and nationality of his literary activity. Being a humanist writer whose works were the apex of English poetry and drama of Renaissance, Shakespeare went over critical nature and the tragic contradictions of his time; he appealed to acute political problems and created unforgettably vivid, real nature of the characters. The problem of “man and history” was the main problem of his works. Medieval works played important role in the formation of the works by Shakespeare. As other post medieval writers and poets, he also was influenced by the Middle Age English literature. His several works such as, poems, historical chronicles, tragedies were based on medieval works. For example, at the beginning of the third chapter, it was stated that he used medieval ballads in his historical chronicle “Henry IV”. Besides it, William Shakespeare mostly was admired by great figure of the fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer. For example, his Mercutio’s speech in “Queen Mab” takes its origin from G. Chaucer’s “Parliament of Fowles”, “The two noble kinsmen” from Chaucer’s “The Knight’s Tale” etc.

If the influence of medieval drama on the post medieval plays was mentioned, then it would be rather logical to point out the influence of the medieval work on Shakespeare’s drama “Troilus and Cressida”. From the name of this tragedy, it is obvious that Shakespeare influenced by Chaucer’s “Troilus and Criseyde”. Shakespeare simply paraphrased his poem. Generally, the story is the same. However, he changed some features of characters. During the fourteenth century, most medieval poets based their works on love stories. Chaucer also used this theme in his poem. The fact, which focused of an attention, is that, those years, the rights between men and women were equal. Chaucer also touched this fact in his poem and his main character Criseyde is in the same level with men of her period. Criseyde was described as an honest and clever woman characteristic to a medieval woman. Woman of the medieval period had temper about waiting for their love; even they did not answer their love immediately. For example, Chaucer described in the beginning of his work that how Criseyde refused letters coming from Troilus. Geoffrey Chaucer himself admired his characters. He liked Criseyde’s character as being honorary, sweet and honorable woman. But William Shakespeare almost changed the features belonging to Chaucer’s characters. Of course, it was not in vain. It turned out that, any poet or writer would like to satisfy his audience of readers, the people, by referring to every aspects of his period. Thus, Shakespeare introduced his characters the sides, advantages and disadvantages. As we know that, William Shakespeare lived and created in the Elizabethan time. The relationship between women and men were more different from Chaucer’s time. That was why, his attitude towards his characters changed. In those times, men were dominant part of the society. Women were not so appreciated as in medieval

period. His heroine Cressida was considered one of the unpopular and ignorant women of those times. She embodied weak, hopeless, disappointed woman of her period. Shakespeare's Troilus also differs from Chaucer's hero. Chaucer depicted Troilus as a generous, kind-hearted, innocent man who adores his love. Even by these features, he could not confess his love to Criseyde and that was why he asked Pandarus to help him. In addition, Chaucer described his hero also as a jealous man. However, Shakespeare's character is different from previous Troilus, as it was mentioned. Almost, Shakespeare changes him completely. He could not express his feeling towards Cressida as was expected. It seems as if he did not love her. He saw Cressida as an ordinary thing than any beloved. It could be considered that, his love is not sincere as Chaucer's hero, because Troilus created by Shakespeare had one aim, and it was getting Cressida in his bed. Shakespeare changed the second characters of the tragedy as well. For example, Chaucer's Pandarus was more kindly, and helped Troilus and Criseyde in order they were happy. Even he gave some advice to Troilus when Cressida betrayed him. But Shakespeare's Pandarus is a knight and serious. Here he was described as an honest man, even, he imagined himself in the place of his friend, in order to define whether he intended to help his friend.

Generally, these two works are different, though they were written under the same name. Chaucer developed his characters in a stable line, not changing their features, for example, if one of the characters is serious, then this character will be serious until the end of the work. However, Shakespeare's tragedy is full of the transitions such as sudden changes as effects of the joyful and sad times. Both of these works are still read today. The reader of Chaucer's work imagines himself or herself in the real life, because Chaucer referred to natural events while creating his work. One cannot feel the same emotions as in Shakespeare's poem, because the great figure of Renaissance exaggerated all characters and setting of whole story.

Literary legacy of Shakespeare is forever and inexhaustible source of ideas, stories and images for future generations of writers. Shakespearean tradition is the tradition of realism and national features, which are immortal. This tradition largely determined by the development of drama, poetry and novels of modern times. Thanks to the influence of the medieval times, this tradition helped other authors of subsequent periods.

Medieval English literature had a great impact on post medieval periods, their writers, poets, and works. By means of these interrelations between the Middle Ages and post medieval periods, English literature introduced the world literature its world wide famous authors and popular works.

## Conclusion

The MA dissertation gives preference to reaching its conclusions systematically in sections. The introduction implies that the medieval period of English literature is of the most complicated literatures of world nations. Despite the dissertation is going to reach its concluding yields, it does not mean the medieval period of English literature comprises only literary properties enlisted in the above chapters. Rather it is the very complex phenomena of English, as well as world history. The work was not mature and comprehensive enough to cover the medieval period with its detailed depiction. To illustrate a thorough picture of the literary period, one would better to have a trip back to the history of English literature and contemplate every process, and even every single piece of work through eyes. Approaching to aspects of the period unit by unit requires supernatural research skills, ability to vividly describe even processes of less importance, high-developed aptitude to handle data obtained through research, artistic talents to give everything in its right place. Thus, this MA dissertation focused on the very significant stages, figures and works of the period, while the rest remained out of light because of the format limits.

Conclusion of the first chapter could be summarized as follows:

1. The formation of English literature, culture and nation was due to the result of the Anglo-Saxon invasion with most valuable contribution of the epic poem "Beowulf", running through, pagan poetry introduced to English literary history by the Anglo-Saxons.
2. Following the Anglo-Saxon invasion, the Norman Conquest caused intense changes to the language adapting it to some extent, mode of life and way of thinking.
3. Thanks to Normans, the Norman-French language came into existence bringing the Old English to end and it was laid a ground for emergence of romances. Folk poetry, in somewhat precise words, Robin Hood ballads became more popular throughout the country.

The sequence of the stages of the periods brings to attention prominent figures and brilliant works. Thus, the conclusions of the second chapter are as follows:

1. The main thought was centralized on the fourteenth century of the history of English literature at most, as the revival of literature and emergence of images would have to be approached distinctly.
2. The second part of the fourteenth century of the English literary history is marked by a rapid growth and prosperity. Prevailing discrepancies and contradictions existing in the English social life paved the way for further literary movements. Langland, another

outstanding member of the artistic class of the period, set forth in his didactic allegories social aspirations and expectations on the eve the outraged peasant uprisings.

3. The time's literature featured chivalric romances, as well. Meanwhile, John Gower with his trilingual creativity initiated a perfect international medium. His contemporary Geoffrey Chaucer, for his part, opened new horizons in English literature. He is considered not only the last figure of the medieval period, but also the first poet of the new period. His works already sparkled of the subtle lights of first humanist trends of Renaissance.

Finally, according to the third chapter of this MA dissertation, the conclusions could be as the inevitable influences of social life, historical events, styles and genres, especially, folk poetry, ballads, miracle and morality plays, and finally well-known authors of the medieval English literature to the post-medieval period. Certainly, any period takes its roots from the preceding one as its continuance implied in other form or circumstance. To sum up the final chapter, it would be better to state that they were Renaissance and Romanticism to have mostly benefited the medieval period, while it was Geoffrey Chaucer, who greatly influenced his successors. Works enjoying the highest degree of literary impact on subsequent literary works were ballads and Arthurian romances.

The above claimed thoughts can be substantiated with the following citation:

“Medieval literature has an endless fascination. It lies at an extreme edge of our historical reach. And it opens a strange, ceremonious, world – comprehensively meaningful – whose ideals, at least. Are in some respects superior to those of the modern world.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “A History of English Literature”, Chapter I, “The Middle Ages: From Oral to Written Literature”. Alastair Fowler, 1987-89. p.28-29, l. 34-37

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